W. H. McLeod

Early Sikh Tradition

A Study of the Janam-sākhīs

Clarendon Press

Early Sikh Tradition is a study of the
Panjabi narratives of the life of Guru
Nanak known as janam-sakhis. The janam-
sakhis are important as examples of
hagiographic growth-processes, as sources
of Panjab history for the post-Nanak
period within which they developed, as a
cohesive factor in subsequent Sikh history,
and as the earliest works of Panjabi prose.
Early Sikh Tradition examines these four
aspects of the janam-sakhi literature,
concentrating in particular on the first. It
seeks to trace the origins of the janam-
sakhi style, it describes the anecdotal and
discourse forms used by the janam-sakhi
narrators, and it reconstructs a pattern
whereby janam-sakhi traditions were
assembled and transmitted. The book owes
a significant debt to techniques of analysis
developed over many decades of biblical
studies. As such it offers a contribution to
comparative religious literature as well as
to the history and religion of the Sikhs.

EARLY SIKH TRADITION

EARLY SIKH
TRADITION

A Study of the Janam-sākhis

BY

W. H. McLEOD

CLARENDON PRESS · OXFORD
1980

© *W. H. McLeod 1980*

To
Margaret

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AG	The Ādi Granth.
Ā'in	Abu al-Fazl, *Ā'in-i-Akbari*, trans. H. Blochmann and H. S. Jarrett, 3 vols., Calcutta, 1873–94.
AS	Piār Singh (ed.), *Śambhū Nāth vāli Janam Patri Bābe Nānak Ji ki prasidh nān Ādi Sākhīān*, Paṭiālā, 1969. (Printed edition of a text of the *Ādi Sākhīs*.)
ASI	Alexander Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India* annua! reports.
Aṣṭ	*aṣṭapadi.*
B40	The India Office Library manuscript Panj. B40. The folio numbers given in *B40* citations are the manuscript's original Gurmukhī numerals. The Gurmukhī pagination is given in the margin of both Piār Singh (ed.), *Janam Sākhī Sri Gurū Nānak Dev Ji* (Amritsar, 1974), and W. H. McLeod, *The B40 Janam-sākhī* (Amritsar, 1979).
B40(Eng)	W. H. McLeod, *The B40 Janam-sākhī* (Amritsar, 1979). English translation, with introduction and annotations, of the *B40 Janam-sākhī*.
B41	The India Office Library manuscript Panj. B41 (a *Bālā* janam-sākhī).
Bālā JS	The *Bālā* janam-sākhī lithographed by Hāfaz Qutub Dīn of Lahore in A.D. 1871.
BG	The *vārs* of Bhāī Gurdās.
BL	British Library.
Cole JS	The *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī.*
CPL	Central Public Library, Paṭiālā.
CUL	Cambridge University Library.
Enc Isl	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, London, 1913–38.
Enc Isl (NE)	*Encyclopaedia of Islam (New Edition)* London, 1960– .
GNM	Sarūp Dās Bhallā, *Gurū Nānak Mahimā*, ed. Shamsher Singh Ashok and Gobind Singh Lāmbā, Paṭiālā, 1970. (Volume I of a printed edition of the *Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā*.)
GNSR	W. H. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford, 1968. Repr. Delhi, 1976.
GR	The edition of the *Gyān-ratanāvali* lithographed by Charāg Dīn and Sarāj Dīn, Lahore, A.D. 1891.
GTC	H. A. Rose (ed.), *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province*, 3 vols., Lahore, 1911–19.
Haf JS	The *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī.*

IA	*Indian Antiquary.*
IG	*Imperial Gazetteer of India.*
IOL	India Office Library.
LDP	The Languages Department of the Pañjāb Government, Paṭiālā.
LDP 194	Manuscript no. 194 of the LDP.
Macauliffe	M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, 6 vols., Oxford, 1909.
Mih JS	*Janam-sākhī Srī Gurū Nānak Dev Jī*, ed. Kirpāl Singh *et al.*, 2 vols., Amritsar, 1962–9. (Printed edition of the extant text of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*.)
MK	Kāhn Singh Nābhā, *Guruśabad Ratanākar Mahān Koś* (commonly known as the *Mahān Koś*), 2nd edition revised with Addendum, Paṭiālā, 1960.
NPr	Santokh Singh, *Gur Nānak Prakāś* (the *Nānak Prakāś*.)
PHLS	Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Pañjābī hath-likhatān dī sūchī*, 2 vols., Paṭiālā, 1961–3.
PNQ	*Panjab Notes and Queries.*
PPP	*Panjab Past and Present.*
Pur JS	Vīr Singh (ed.), *Purātan Janam-sākhī*, 5th edition, Amritsar, 1959.
S	Samvat, dating according to the Vikramī era.
SLTGN(Eng)	Gaṇḍā Singh (ed.), *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Gurū Nānak* (English section), Gurū Nānak Birth Quincentenary edition of *PPP*, Paṭiālā, 1969.
SLTGN(Pbi)	Ibid. (Pañjābī Section).
SRL	Sikh Reference Library, Amritsar.

In the case of multiple-volume works footnote citations normally give two figures, separated by a full stop. The first figure specifies the volume number(s). The same form is also used for citations from Santokh Singh's *Gur Nānak Prakāś* (abbrev. *NPr*). In these *NPr* citations the first number indicates the section of work. (I designates the *pūrabāradh* section, and II the *utarāradh* section.)

In Ādi Granth references a single figure designates the number of a shabad or (in the case of a citation from a *vār*) the number of a *pauṛī*. A figure added in parentheses indicates a particular stanza (*aṅk*) within the designated shabad. (IR) indicates a reference from the *rahāu*, or refrain, of a shabad. Most *vār* references incorporate two figures, separated by a colon. This form is used for citations which refer to shaloks (*ślok*). The second figure designates the number of the shalok; and the first that of the *pauṛī* to which it is attached. For example, *Vār Malār* 3:2 designates the second of the shaloks attached to the third *pauṛī* of the *vār* in *Malār* rāga.

SECTION I

1
THE HISTORICAL SETTING
The Pañjāb 1500–1800

HISTORICAL periods always present problems of definition and Indian history is no exception. Sharp divisions must inevitably be blurred by persistent continuities. Most historians would agree, however, that the Mughal invasions together constitute an event of unusual importance, and for many this importance has been sufficient to warrant a clear period division at the year 1526, the occasion of Bābur's victory over Ibrāhīm Lodī on the field of Pānipat.

In the case of the Pañjāb there is an additional reason for regarding the early decades of the sixteenth century as the prelude to a new period. During the last four-and-a-half centuries the most important development in Pañjāb history has unquestionably been the evolution of the Sikh community and its rise to a position of enduring prominence within the Land of the Five Rivers. This community had its beginnings in a group of disciples who gathered around their chosen teacher during the first half of the sixteenth century. While Bābur was securing his hold upon Northern India, Gurū Nānak was instructing his followers in a village of Central Pañjāb. Under his guidance there developed in the village of Kartārpur the religious community which we know today as the Sikh Panth. It was a community which during the period extending from the death of Nānak to the late eighteenth century was to ascend from the obscurity of Kartārpur to a position of predominance within the Pañjāb. As Mughal power in the north disintegrated, Sikh strength increased until eventually during the early decades of the nineteenth century the province became an avowedly Sikh kingdom, ruled in the name of the Khālsā by the celebrated Mahārājā Rañjīt Siṅgh.

Today the prominence of the Sikh Panth remains undiminished. Although the political and military glories of Rañjīt Siṅgh did not survive his death, the Panth, after a brief period of decline, soon recovered its vigour. Today its representatives are to be found scattered throughout the world. The wave of Indian immigration which in recent years has reached the United Kingdom consists largely of Pañjābīs, most of them Sikhs. An earlier wave of Pañjābī migration travelled to the east coast of North America, and during the same period ripples reached as far as the flax swamps and scrub-covered hills of New Zealand. During the past hundred years they have shown themselves to be a remarkably mobile people. In addition to the substantial communities in England, California, and British Columbia there are many thousands of Sikhs to be found in

South-East Asia, Hong Kong, Fiji, East Africa, and the Middle East.

Needless to say, the community as it exists today is no mere replica of the religious following which gathered around Nānak during the first half of the sixteenth century. Other influences have shaped the Panth during its subsequent history and the result is certainly not to be defined in exclusively religious terms. This should not, however, suggest an absence of direct links connecting the earliest disciples with their modern descendants. The Sikh Panth which confronts us today is the product of a process of transformation incipient within the earliest group of disciples and essentially complete by the end of the eighteenth century.

Nānak, the first of the Sikh Gurūs, was followed by a series of nine successors, all of them Pañjābīs. There was thus established a line of ten masters, corresponding in terms of time to the period of the Great Mughals. Gobind Siṅgh, the tenth and last of the succession, died in 1708, the year following the death of Auraṅgzeb.[1] Inevitably Sikh tradition concentrates almost exclusively upon the activities of the Gurūs and deals only indirectly with less obvious influences affecting the development of the community during the first two centuries of its existence. Of the more important of these influences one commands a particular significance in terms of its impact upon the evolving Panth. This was the caste constituency of the community.

The first six Gurūs all belonged to the mercantile Khatrī caste and all resided in villages of Central Pañjāb.[2] Their caste origins and their rural domicile were of crucial significance in the development of their following. The villages of Central Pañjāb contained a dominant concentration of Jaṭs, and in accordance with established tradition Khatrīs were accorded a role as the teachers of Jaṭs. This traditional status, together with the inherent appeal of the Gurūs' teachings, attracted a substantial following from amongst the Jaṭs, and during the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Jaṭ segment of the Sikh community acquired a preponderance which it has never lost. The Sikhs entered the eighteenth century as a community still lead by a Khatrī succession, but strongly Jaṭ in membership. It was inevitable that the community should have been influenced by its numerically dominant element. Without relinquishing its loyalty to the teachings of Nānak it had assumed features which derived from its Jaṭ antecedents.

This pattern of development received a considerable impetus during the eighteenth century. In 1708 Gurū Gobind Siṅgh died without an heir. Ever since the time of the fourth Gurū a hereditary principle of succession

---

[1] The nine successors of Nānak were Aṅgad (1539–52), Amar Dās (1552–74), Rām Dās (1574–81), Arjan (1581–1606), Hargobind (1606–44), Har Rāi (1644–61), Har Kriṣaṇ (1661–4), Tegh Bahādur (1664–75), and Gobind Siṅgh (1675–1708).

[2] The remaining four Gurūs were also Khatrīs. Nānak and Aṅgad both passed over the members of their own families in choosing successors. Gurū Amar Dās bestowed the succession upon Jeṭhā, husband of his daughter and a Khatrī of the Soḍhī sub-caste. Jeṭhā assumed the name Rām Dās and in turn chose his youngest son Arjan as successor. Thereafter the succession remained within the male line of Soḍhīs descended from Rām Dās. The last four Gurūs were compelled to spend most of their time beyond the borders of the Pañjāb.

had been accepted and Gurū Gobind Siṅgh's death without surviving heirs brought a crisis. At first the answer appeared to be a transfer of the legitimacy to a different line and for this distinction the obvious candidate was a Sikh named Bandā Bahādur, or Bandā the Brave.

During the time of Gurū Arjan the Panth had begun to attract the unfavourable notice of the Mughal emperors and in 1606 Arjan had died in a Mughal prison. Skirmishes between Sikhs and the Lahore administration broke out during the period of Arjan's son, Hargobind, but these petered out when Hargobind withdrew to the Śivālik Hills in 1634. The period of peace which followed was abruptly terminated when in 1675 the ninth Gurū, Tegh Bahādur, was executed at Aurangzeb's command. Although Gurū Gobind Siṅgh remained in the Śivālik Hills for most of his life, his principal enemy was to be a Mughal force from Sirhind which entered a hills war against him. Immediately after his death and that of Aurangzeb Mughal authority in the Pañjāb declined rapidly. Persistent rural unrest now developed into a widespread rebellion and threw up a new Sikh leader. This was Bandā Bahādur.

Bandā's early successes against the Mughal administration in the Pañjāb qualified him in the eyes of many as a suitable successor to Gurū Gobind Siṅgh. It was, however, a disputed status, and his execution in 1716 finally settled the issue. A more dispersed variety of leadership now developed, together with other features which increasingly distinguish the later Sikh community from the earlier following of the Gurūs.

The eighteenth century was a period of considerable confusion. Earlier patterns of belief and behaviour were either extinct or largely unsuited to new needs and it is scarcely surprising that fresh patterns should have emerged during this turbulent period. As one might expect, the customs and ideals which now ascended to prominence within the Sikh Panth related closely to the cultural inheritance of the Panth's dominant element and to the distinctive circumstances which forced the change. The patterns which emerged under these pressures derived in large measure from Jaṭ antecedents and from the nature of the warfare which occupied the middle years of the century. For the Panth this crucial century began in 1699 and may be said to have concluded in 1799. In 1699 Gurū Gobind Siṅgh promulgated the Order of the Khālsā, the Sikh brotherhood which in its developed form has dominated subsequent Sikh history; and in 1799 Rañjīt Siṅgh secured control of Lahore, the key to the Pañjāb. The Khālsā brotherhood served as a focus of Sikh ideals throughout the century, faithfully reflecting in its evolving discipline the development and consolidation of these ideals.

Bandā's unsuccessful rebellion was followed by a period of restored Mughal authority and persecution of the Sikhs. This campaign was rarely pursued with any vigour, for the restoration was never strong and Nādir Shāh's invasion in 1739 brought another collapse. The restoration which followed Nādir Shāh's withdrawal was the last. The next invader, Ahmad Shāh Abdālī of Afghānistān, finally destroyed all hope of a Mughal revival in the Pañjāb.

Ahmad Shāh Abdālī's nine invasions covered the years from 1747 to 1769. The Afghān failed to establish himself in Northern India, but having destroyed the Mughals and seriously weakened the Marāthās Ahmad Shāh did serve to prepare the way for the establishment of Sikh authority. This authority first passed into the hands of twelve warrior bands or associations known as misls. These were independent groups of Sikhs bound in a loose confederation by their rural origins, by the ties of a common religious affiliation, and in the earlier days by opposition to a common enemy. The third of these was the more important, for the final withdrawal of Ahmad Shāh brought a period of internecine warfare amongst the misls. Eventually one of the chieftains, Rañjīt Siṅgh of the Shukerchakīā misl, secured an ascendancy over the remainder. This brought him to sovereignty over the entire area of the Pañjāb, and with the establishment of that sovereignty the most significant period in Sikh history came to an end. Although the teachings of Nānak had never been abandoned, the community which, in the form of the evolved Khālsā, emerged at the end of the eighteenth century was something radically different from the group of disciples who first gathered at Kartārpur.

This account covers in outline the period from the time of Nānak to the emergence of the fully-fledged Khālsā.[1] It should be added that whereas an outline can be sketched with a certain distinctness much of the detail remains very obscure. Sources for the period are few and generally unsatisfactory, and conclusions concerning this earlier period must be in part dependent upon social patterns described in sources which relate to later periods. An obvious source for the early period is the Ādi Granth, the scripture compiled by Gurū Arjan during the years 1603 and 1604. The Ādi Granth provides an abundance of information concerning the religious beliefs of Nānak and his immediate successors, but the historian who pursues a wider social, economic, or political interest must labour hard in order to extract from it the material which he requires. Material of this sort, although certainly present, is not provided in a readily accessible form.

The help offered by Persian sources is also limited. Several Persian chronicles deal with this period, but almost all of them direct their courtly interest away from the Pañjāb. Only two significant exceptions exist. One is the Ā'in-i-Akbari, which several times refers to features of the Lahore Sūba;[2] and the other the Khulāsāt-ut-Tavarikh of Sujān Rāi Bhaṇḍārī. Sujān Rāi was a native of Baṭālā and his narrative, which was completed in 1696, largely concerns his native province.[3] The section on the Nānak-panthīs in the Dabistān-i-Mazāhib[4] and Nūr Muhammad's

---

[1] For a fuller outline of the same period see W. H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Oxford, 1976), chaps. 1 and 3.

[2] *Ā'in* II. 310–47.

[3] For an English translation of Sujān Rāi's treatment of the Pañjāb see Muhammad Akbar, *The Punjab Under the Mughals* (Lahore, 1948), pp. 285–311.

[4] David Shea and Anthony Troyer, *The Dabistan or School of Manners*, vol. ii (Paris, 1843), pp. 246–88. Most of the section dealing with the Nānak-panthīs has also been translated by Gaṇḍā Singh in *PPP* 1. i (April 1967), pp. 47–71. The portion of the latter translation dealing specifically with Guru Nanak also appears in *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 45–53.

Jaṅg-nāma[1] might also be added, but beyond these four works there is little except the brief comments included in such works as the *Bābur-nāma* and the *Tuzuk-i-Jahāṅgīrī*. Although European visitors subsequently had much to say about the Pañjāb, and although some of their material is of great value, the principal contributors all arrived too late to observe the critical period of Sikh development or to secure access to reliable sources.[2]

In view of this paucity of source material it is perhaps surprising that the devotional literature of the Sikhs has not received more attention. In such circumstances problems associated with the reading and analysis of the Ādi Granth do not constitute a sufficient reason for continuing to neglect it, nor do they provide adequate justification for our undisturbed ignorance of other early products of the Sikh community. Three varieties of devotional literature deserve particular attention. First there are the poetic works of Bhāī Gurdās, a nephew of the third Gurū and a contemporary of the three Gurūs who followed him. The *vārs* of Bhāī Gurdās constitute a source of considerable importance, one which has yet to receive the close scrutiny and analysis which it deserves. Secondly, there is the substantial Dasam Granth, a heterogeneous collection of writings attributed to the tenth Gurū. Although the attribution seems plainly erroneous for the bulk of its contents this in no way impairs their value, for all are products of the period of Gurū Gobind Siṅgh or of the years immediately following his death. With this collection should be bracketed the Persian compositions of Nand Lāl Goya, another Sikh of the same period. Thirdly there are the *janam-sākhīs*, hagiographic accounts of the life of Nānak. These had their first beginnings in the late sixteenth century, flourished during the seventeenth century, and then decreased as other concerns increasingly dominated the Panth's interest. The decline has, however, never been total. Janam-sākhīs are still extensively read today.[3]

This study concerns the third of these categories. In the case of the janam-sākhīs the problem has been one of misunderstanding rather than total neglect. The various janam-sākhīs purport to narrate the events of the life of Nānak and it is as generally trustworthy biographies that they have hitherto been used. This accords them a reliability which they do not possess, while ignoring the considerable interest and value which they do in fact offer. The janam-sākhīs are important as examples of hagiographic growth-processes, as sources of Pañjāb history for the post-Nānak period within which they developed, as a cohesive factor in subsequent Sikh history, and as the earliest works of Pañjābī prose. The purpose of this study will be to examine these four aspects of the janam-sākhī literature.

---

[1] An English translation by Gaṇḍā Singh was published by Khalsa College, Amritsar, in 1939.

[2] The more important of these early observers are: James Browne, *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks* (published with his *Indian Tracts*, London, 1788); George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England &c.* (London, 1808); John Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs* (first published in *Asiatick Researches*, vol. xi, Calcutta, 1810, pp. 197–292, and reprinted separately, London, 1812); H. T. Prinsep, *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab &c.* (Calcutta, 1834); W. L. M'Gregor, *The History of the Sikhs* (London, 1846); J. D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs* (London, 1849). See also Gaṇḍā Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs* (Calcutta, 1962).

[3] For surveys of all three varieties see W. H. McLeod, op. cit., chaps. 2 and 4.

2
THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS
A Definition and Summary Description

THE janam-sākhīs are commonly defined as 'biographies of Gurū Nānak'.
This standard description is mentioned here only in order to reject it.
Whatever else the janam-sākhīs may be they are certainly not biographies.
It is true that they do concern the person of Gurū Nānak, and it can also
be claimed that certain elements within the janam-sākhīs must assuredly
derive from authentic incidents associated with the actual life of Nānak.
This does not, however, mean that they can be regarded as biographies,
nor that they can be uncritically used as sources for the life of the Gurū.
Much misunderstanding has resulted from the application of this mistaken
interpretation of the janam-sākhīs.

The janam-sākhīs are properly defined not as biographies of Gurū
Nānak, but as hagiographic accounts of his life. They are tradition in
precisely the same sense as the *Hadīth*, and although they lack some of the
features associated with their Muslim counterpart they have nevertheless
developed in response to the same impulses, and in a less formalized
manner they have fulfilled much the same role within their parent com-
munity. Although the distinction between biography and hagiography
may seem obvious, it has in practice been largely ignored and much
misunderstanding has consequently persisted. Until the distinction is
clearly understood there can be no appreciation of the true nature of the
janam-sākhīs, nor of their manifold contents. It is not sufficient to interpret
them as nuclei of authentic tradition overlaid and in some measure
obscured by the legendary accretions of later periods. There are indeed a
few isolated anecdotes which appear to fit this description, but it is not
an accurate representation of the janam-sākhīs as a whole. Even when
stripped of all their wonder stories the janam-sākhīs do not offer an account
of the actual events of the Gurū's life. What they do provide is an *inter-
pretation* of that life, an interpretation springing from the piety and
commitment of later generations.

This fundamental distinction may be expressed in a slightly different
way. The janam-sākhīs find their origin not in the actual life of Nānak but
rather in a myth which derives from that life. The word 'myth' will recur
during the course of this analysis and it is of vital importance to the
analysis that its meaning in this context should be clearly understood.
This clarification is all the more important because the term is a new-
comer to Sikh studies. Although 'myth' has for long been used in a tech-
nical sense by scholars working in biblical and Near Eastern studies, and

although the concept has proved so valuable to social anthropologists, there are still extensive areas largely untouched by it. Sikh tradition provides one such area, one which offers considerable scope for fruitful application of a particular understanding of the concept.

In this context it is most important that the term 'myth' should not be interpreted as a synonym for 'legend'. Although legendary material has been extensively used in the janam-sākhīs to give expression to the myth which constitutes their origin the two terms must be kept rigidly distinct. As far as the purpose and the function of the janam-sākhīs are concerned this distinction between legend and myth is of much greater importance than the difference between legend and the authenticated historical event. Whenever the janam-sākhīs are used as a source for the actual life of Gurū Nānak the latter distinction becomes primary, and the historian who seeks to reconstruct the events of the Gurū's life must endeavour to separate the authentic elements embedded in the janam-sākhīs from the vast quantity of strictly spurious material within which they are set. This, however, is not the principal role or value of the janam-sākhīs. Their principal role has concerned their function within the later community; and as historical sources their value lies chiefly in their testimony to the period and the society within which they evolved. For an analysis of either the role of the janam-sākhīs or of their primary historical value the distinction between legend and history is of little practical importance. It is the myth which matters, and the myth can be served with equal advantage by both legend and history, provided only that the legendary element does not do serious violence to accepted conventions. In this sense myth is a fundamental aspect of the janam-sākhīs. It therefore follows that a firm grasp of this particular usage is a pre-requisite for any sufficient understanding of their true nature.

According to this usage a myth is a construct of the human imagination, developing out of an actual situation and seeking to give meaning to that situation. It is, in other words, an interpretation based upon a particular understanding of a given array of circumstances. This interpretation must be expressed in concrete form. It evolves in response to particular needs and if it is to survive it must continue to fulfil its distinctive function for the society within which it took shape. As long as it retains the capacity to do so it will survive. If it is to retain an acceptable relevance it must evolve in accordance with the changing needs and understanding of the society which it serves, for when it loses its capacity to fulfil a relevant function it will wither. Eventually it will either die or, if it lingers on, will survive as a cultural curiosity. Although every myth should accord with accepted norms of truth and reality, neither its rise nor its survival will relate primarily to such issues. It is the function which must sustain it and when a myth ceases to fulfil its function it must either change or make way for a more effective substitute.

Myths may be expressed in a wide variety of forms. They may exist in oral or in written tradition, and in either case they may be poetry or narrative prose. They may be drama, sagas, anecdotes, or series of

discourses. Their conscious emphasis may be religious, historical, philoso-
phical, or a mixture of all and much more besides. Though commonly
expressed in oral or recorded tradition myth is not necessarily limited to
the spoken or written word. It may be expressed in the ritual of a sacrifice,
in the structure of a liturgy, in the design of a building, or in the multitude
of customs observed by a particular society. The range of possibilities is
enormous. Every society must find means of expressing its myths and any
form which will provide a concrete and immediately comprehensible
expression qualifies thereby as an appropriate vehicle.

It is in precisely this sense that the janam-sākhīs have served as the
vehicle of a powerful myth, one which still commands a wide acceptance
within the society which developed it. The myth which they express may
be briefly stated as follows. Bābā Nānak was the divinely commissioned
giver of salvation. To all who would seek salvation the way lies open. The
means of salvation consists in loyalty to the person of Bābā Nānak and
acceptance of his teachings. This is the myth. The form which was
developed to give it expression was the narrative anecdote which, in
relating some incident concerning the life of Nānak, sought to authenticate
the claims made on his behalf. These anecdotes, collected into anthologies
or structured 'biographies', constitute the janam-sākhīs.

Let it be stressed once again that the issue does not involve questions of
historical truth, at least not in a primary sense. The fundamental question
to ask of a myth should concern not its historical truth but its functional
utility. Inevitably the janam-sākhī narrators have employed both historical
and legendary material in order to give concrete expression to the myth of
Bābā Nānak. It is, for example, safe to accept as historically accurate their
claim that Nānak was born in Talvaṇḍī village, in the year S.1526
(A.D. 1469), and that he was the son of Kālū Bedī.[1] This is a statement of
actual fact and it is also a part of the myth. Having made this statement
concerning place, date, and parentage, the narrators add that a mighty
concourse of celestial beings hailed his birth—three hundred and thirty
million gods, eighty-four Siddhs, nine Nāths, sixty-four Yoginīs, fifty-two
Vīrs, and six Jatīs.[2] Legend has been joined to historical fact but the myth
remains the same.

This example will at once suggest the Lucan account of the Nativity.
Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph, born in Palestine, is greeted at his birth
by the heavenly host of angels.[3] The authentic statement is coupled with a
legendary element in order to express one aspect of the myth of Jesus. For
an analysis of this kind the question is not whether the myth of Nānak or
the myth of Jesus is true. In either case the issue can be affirmed only by
an act of faith.

The nature of the janam-sākhī myth is clearly indicated by the declara-
tions of purpose which some of the narrators attach to their collections of

[1] *B40*, f. 1.
[2] Ibid. For Siddhs and Nāths see below, pp. 68–9, 296. Yoginīs, Vīrs, and Jatīs are legen-
dary figures possessing superhuman powers.
[3] Luke 2:2–14.

anecdotes. In one of the more important janam-sākhīs it is expressed in the following terms:

He who reads or hears this sākhī shall attain to the supreme rapture. He who hears, sings or reads this sākhī shall find his highest desire fulfilled, for through it he shall meet Gurū Bābā Nānak. He who with love sings of the glory of Bābā Nānak or gives ear to it shall obtain joy ineffable in all that he does in this life, and in the life to come salvation.[1]

The word *sākhī* which is here used by the writer to designate his work means, literally, 'testimony'. This is precisely what the janam-sākhīs are intended to be. They are testimonies to the belief which, in its concrete form, becomes the myth of Nānak. In a more specific sense they are, or claim to be, witnesses to actual episodes from the life of Nānak. These episodes are believed to authenticate the soteriological status of Nānak which constitutes the fundamental myth. For this reason the earliest collections were styled simply *sākhiān*, or 'Testimonies'.

It was not long, however, before the title was expanded and the word *sākhī* underwent a slight shift in meaning. One of the earlier collections assumed the title *janam-patri* ('horoscope' or, more precisely, the piece of paper on which a person's horoscope is recorded).[2] Although in a strict sense the expression *janam-patri* related only to the opening anecdote describing the birth of Nānak it came to be applied to the collection as a whole. It was consistently used as a title for the collection which had first appropriated it, and eventually coalesced with the earlier term. The word *patri* was dropped and *sākhī* substituted to form the new compound *janam-sākhī*.

This compound has been used ever since and continues to be used today. Although in a literal sense it can be translated as 'testimonies to the birth (of Nānak)' it no longer projects this meaning. The coalescence has produced a different sense. The translation which best accords with the popular understanding of the meaning of janam-sākhī today is 'biography' and, as we have already observed, this is the term which is most commonly used in English translation. The word *sākhī* has, meanwhile, assumed a somewhat different connotation when used in this context. Occasionally one encounters a usage which implies the earlier meaning of 'witness' or 'testimony'. The usual meaning in modern usage is, however, an 'episode' or 'chapter' from the 'biography' of Nānak. Individual incidents are recorded separately or in integrated series, and each incident or series is called a *sākhī*. The individual *sākhīs* have been gathered into collections, some random and some ordered. These collections constitute the janam-sākhīs.

Although janam-sākhīs of other religious figures have since been

---

[1] *AS*, p. 101. See also *Mih JS* 1. 1.

[2] This was the title used by the janam-sākhīs of the *Bālā* tradition. *Bālā JS*, p. 2. The same term is also affixed to the collection known as the *Ādi Sākhīs*, but in this latter case may perhaps be a copyist's addition. *AS*, p. 1. Piār Singh, 'A Critical Survey of Panjabi Prose in the Seventeenth Century' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University, 1968), p. 68.

written,[1] the term is generally restricted to collections of tales concerning
Gurū Nānak, and if used without any specific indication of its subject it
will invariably refer to him. As a result *janam-sākhī* is commonly translated
not simply as 'biography' but as 'biography of Gurū Nānak'. Whereas this
is certainly an accurate representation of the meaning popularly attached
to the term today, it must again be emphasized that it is in fact a mis-
representation. The emphasis is necessary because of the extensive mis-
understanding which still results from a persistent use of the janam-sākhīs
as historical accounts of the life of Nānak. This was the method followed
at the turn of the century by M. A. Macauliffe and in this sense his ghost
is still very much with us. The janam-sākhīs do indeed have a considerable
importance as historical sources, but only a limited measure of that
importance relates to their usefulness as sources for the life of Nānak.
Their primary significance as historical source-material lies elsewhere. It
consists, first, in the role which the janam-sākhīs have played in the
subsequent history of the Sikh community. Secondly, it is to be found in
those elements incorporated within the janam-sākhīs which relate to the
period of their actual emergence rather than to the earlier period of Gurū
Nānak. In both respects the importance chiefly concerns the period
stretching from the sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century. The
first of these will be more fully explained when dealing with the function of
the janam-sākhīs.[2] The second will be treated in the section which dis-
cusses the contribution of the janam-sākhīs as historical sources.[3]

The customary interpretation of the janam-sākhīs must accordingly be
rejected and an effort made to redefine them. A janam-sākhī is a collection
of hagiographic anecdotes concerning the person of Gurū Nānak (A.D.
1469–1539). These anecdotes, both individually and in their collective
form, all serve to express a single myth relating to the life and teachings of
Nānak, namely that he was sent into the world by God to demonstrate the
way of salvation to an erring and confused mankind. In order to express
this myth the anonymous narrators responsible for the various anecdotes
have drawn in some small measure from authentic memories concerning
the actual life of Nānak, and in considerable measure from current legend.

Some of the individual anecdotes are the product of simple borrowing
from earlier traditions, whereas others derive from complicated growth
processes. Most of the borrowings and much of the growth process must
be related to the period of oral transmission. This not only preceded the
first recording of anecdotes, but continues to the present day. As a result
the expansion of the janam-sākhī traditions, though particularly active
during the seventeenth century, is still continuing. It was during the late
sixteenth or early seventeenth century that material drawn from oral
sources was first recorded in written form. The earlier written collections
(and some of their later descendants) recorded individual anecdotes in a
random manner, the only deference to chronology being a simple sequence
of birth, childhood, manhood, and death. Later collections devised more

---

[1] There exist janam-sākhīs of Kabīr and Nāmdev.
[2] See below, pp. 244–7.   [3] Chap. 14, pp. 250–67.

detailed chronological structures and reordered the individual anecdotes to accord with these predetermined patterns. In some instances a later manuscript will represent a generally faithful copying of an earlier version, but in most cases there will be some significant departures. Earlier versions are commonly augmented by the addition of minor details, extra anecdotes, or clusters of anecdotes, and are sometimes distinguished by alterations in the chronological pattern. In some instances supplementary manuscripts have served as sources for such additions, and in others the later copyist has drawn from current oral tradition.

The language of most janam-sākhīs is Pañjābī and until the nineteenth century the script was almost invariably Gurmukhī. Versions copied in the Arabic script do eventually appear, but they are exceedingly rare. Although distinct variations of language are to be found within the janam-sākhīs only occasionally are they sufficient to justify any claim that a writer has actually abandoned Pañjābī. Three principal varieties of linguistic difference are to be found. There is, first, a range of dialects extending from the Mājhī of the central tract (the Bārī Doāb) to the Poṭhohārī of Rāwalpiṇḍī District. Secondly, there is within the narrative traditions a gradual change from the primitive Pañjābī prose of the earliest manuscripts to the more refined language of the latest letterpress editions. Thirdly, there is a pronounced difference between the same crude Pañjābī of the earliest manuscripts and the sophisticated language of that variety of later janam-sākhī which stresses exegesis rather than narrative.

Several of the copyists have recorded the date on which they completed their work, and if to their manuscripts we add the modern printed editions the period which they span runs from the middle of the seventeenth century to the present day. It must be stressed that these dates refer to the actual copying of extant manuscripts. They do not necessarily refer to the original compiling of particular collections and in most cases it is abundantly evident that the extant work has been directly copied from an earlier manuscript or manuscripts. In a few important instances manuscripts bearing eighteenth-century dates must be related to the seventeenth century rather than to the time when they were actually copied, for it is clear that their material derives mainly from the earlier period. The seventeenth century was the formative period in the development of the janam-sākhīs, and it is with this century, running over into the opening decades of its successor, that any discussion of the janam-sākhīs must be primarily concerned.

The outcome of this continuing process is an indeterminate but obviously substantial number of manuscript janam-sākhīs. Most of these are concentrated within the Pañjāb.[1] Others are to be found scattered throughout India and the libraries of the western world, two of the most important being held by the India Office Library in London.[2] In 1870 the first printed edition appeared and the trade has flourished ever since. Most of the manuscript copies can be distributed amongst four, or perhaps five,

[1] See Appendix 6.   [2] IOL MSS. Panj. B6 and B40.

recognizable traditions. The printed versions, although they have continued the process of growth and diversification, are later extensions of these same groups or traditions. In our attempt to analyse the janam-sākhīs frequent reference will have to be made to these various traditions and to their principal manuscript collections. For this reason a description of the more important extant janam-sākhīs will precede the attempt to analyse their actual development.

3
THE PRINCIPAL JANAM-SĀKHĪS

MOST of the janam-sākhīs fall into one of a small number of recognizable groups or traditions, the only significant exception being the unique *B40 Janam-sākhī* held by the India Office Library. Each of these traditions possesses distinctive characteristics and there is rarely any difficulty in allocating a manuscript to its appropriate category. For this reason the various manuscripts will be described under the headings of their various traditions.

One feature common to all the traditions which should be made clear at the outset is that they are all, in their extant forms, composite products. All have drawn upon a diversity of earlier sources. Their identity as distinctive groups or traditions has arisen only because particular selections were subsequently copied, completely or in substantial part, by later hands. For this reason it is important to distinguish three varieties of participant in the development process. These are the original *narrators* of oral tradition; the *compilers* who made selections from oral tradition and recorded their individual selections in manuscripts; and the *copyists* who with varying degrees of faithfulness reproduced these earliest compilations in later manuscript or, even later, printed form. During the later stages of the development process participants occasionally combined the roles of both compiler and copyist. They were copyists in that they reproduced earlier manuscripts but compilers in that they combined extracts from more than one source to produce new selections.

Such details are, however, aspects of the discussion which must follow the account of extant janam-sākhīs. This account will be largely descriptive, its purpose being to provide a frame of reference for the analysis which will follow.

THE BĀLĀ JANAM-SĀKHĪS

When during his visit to the Pañjāb in 1805 Colonel Malcolm made inquiries concerning Sikh history and religion he was informed that Bābā Nānak had been accompanied on his travels by 'a person named Bālā Sandhū'.[1] He adds that it is on this person's authority that 'most of the miracles and wonders of his journeys are related'.[2] Although Malcolm does make passing reference to two other sources,[3] it is evident from his

---

[1] John Malcolm, 'Sketch of the Sikhs', in *Asiatick Researches*, vol. xi (Calcutta, 1810), p. 205.
[2] Ibid.
[3] The first is the *Bhacta Malli*, an unidentifiable work evidently confused with the *Bhakta Māla* of Nābhā Dās and perhaps with the *Bhagat-ratanāvalī* of Manī Singh. The second is Bhāī Gurdās

account that the *Bālā* version of the life and travels of Bābā Nānak had been accepted as standard by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

It is this status which constitutes the principal importance of the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs. In spite of their claims to be the 'original janam-sākhī' there can be no doubt that they represent an intermediate stage in the evolution of the form, and that others are accordingly more significant in terms of age and simplicity of structure. Having first emerged during the middle decades of the seventeenth century the *Bālā* tradition flourished increasingly during the eighteenth century and eventually secured its position as the standard version of the life of Nānak. This position it retained unchallenged until the rediscovery of the *Purātan* tradition late in the nineteenth century. The publication of Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion* in 1909 eventually transferred the primary reputation to the *Purātan* version, but the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs yielded nothing in popularity and to this day they dominate the Pañjābī market.

Although the reasons for this *Bālā* ascendancy are not altogether clear, one which certainly played a major role was its confident claim to represent an eye-witness account of the life and travels of Bābā Nānak. All *Bālā* janam-sākhīs begin with a prologue which purports to describe the manner in which Bālā Sandhū (commonly known as Bhāī Bālā) was summoned before Nānak's successor Aṅgad and how he then proceeded to narrate all that he had witnessed as the first Gurū's constant companion. The earliest of the extant *Bālā* versions begins as follows:

The *Janam-patri* of Bābā Nānakjī

In the year Sammat fifteen hundred and eighty two, S. 1582, on the fifth day of the bright half of the month of Vaisākh, Pairā Mokhā, a Khatrī of Sultānpur, wrote this book. Gurū Aṅgad commanded it to be written. Pairā recorded the dictation of Bālā, a Sandhū Jaṭ who had come from Talvaṇḍī, the village of Rāi Bhoi. He had come in search of Gurū Aṅgad. The recording of his account took two months and seventeen days to complete. All the facts and all the places visited by Gurū Nānakjī were faithfully and fluently described by Bhāī Bālā, with the result that Gurū Aṅgad was greatly pleased with him. Bhāī Bālā and Mardānā the Bard accompanied Bābā Nānak on his travels and Bhāī Bālā was with him during the period he spent at the commissariat [of Daulat Khān in Sultānpur].[1]

The narrative then proceeds to describe how Gurū Aṅgad was one day sitting in his village of Khaḍūr disconsolately reflecting upon the fact that he did not know Bābā Nānak's date of birth. It so happened that Bālā Sandhū, the first Gurū's companion, had only recently learnt the identity of his Master's successor, and having discovered the location of Gurū Aṅgad's residence he arrived at this convenient moment to pay his respects. In response to a request from Gurū Aṅgad he agreed to go back to Talvaṇḍī and search for the horoscope (*janam-patri*) which had been recorded on Nānak's birth. When he returned triumphantly bearing the

---

(see below, pp. 43–45), whom Malcolm mistakenly declares to have been the author of the *Gyān-ratanāvalī*. Ibid., pp. 203, 204.

[1] *Bālā JS*, p. 1. For *janam-patri* as the title of a janam-sākhī see above, p. 11.

document it was discovered that the horoscope had been written in *Śastrī* (Nāgarī) characters. Fortunately there lived in Sultānpur a Sikh named Paiṛā Mokhā who knew 'both characters' and who could accordingly write Gurmukhī as well as read Nāgarī. Paiṛā was duly summoned and having received the horoscope he sat down to transcribe it.[1]

This process mysteriously turns out to be a recording of Bālā's lengthy dictation instead of a transcription of the horoscope. The horoscope incident is clearly a contrived episode designed to create an impression of authenticity, and the clumsiness of the transition from horoscope to narrative has evidently done nothing to frustrate this intention. It has, on the contrary, been abundantly fulfilled, and to this day there still survives a conviction that the *Bālā* tradition must be at least based upon an eye-witness account delivered in the presence of Gurū Aṅgad. This reputation it has retained in spite of numerous inconsistencies, a high incidence of fantasy, and a generally incoherent travel narrative.

Two theories have been advanced to account for the origin of the *Bālā* tradition. The first assumes the authenticity of the tradition's own claims as outlined above. There are, however, inescapable problems involved in the acceptance of these claims, problems which must in some manner be answered before there can be any prospect of sustaining them. The early *Bālā* manuscripts all include denigratory references which could hardly have proceeded from a loyal disciple and would never have been tolerated by the Gurū's successor. These references are plainly the work of the Hindālīs, a schismatic group which evidently regarded itself as Sikh but which accepted the leadership of a rival claimant in opposition to the claims of Gurū Hargobind (1595–1644). This rival was Bidhī Chand, son of Bābā Hindāl of Jaṇḍiālā, and because his claim was advanced in the name of his father the group bore the name Hindālī.[2]

Within the earliest extant janam-sākhīs of the *Bālā* tradition there are several episodes which seek to exalt Bābā Hindāl at the expense of Nānak. These references vary in emphasis. At one point there is propounded a threefold apostolic succession which begins with Kabīr, continues through Nānak, and reaches its climax in Hindāl.[3] Elsewhere Nānak and Hindāl are both accorded earlier incarnations in the court of King Janak, with Nānak cast in the humble role of oil-bearer (*telī*).[4] Finally, there occurs in some of the manuscripts a story which seems to suggest that Nānak once requested Aṅgad to grant him seignorial rights over his daughter.[5]

---

[1] *Bālā JS*, pp. 1–7.
[2] *GNSR*, p. 23. The group is also known as the Nirañjanī panth. Jaṇḍiālā in Amritsar District was the group's centre. Hindāl was himself a Jaṭ from the pargana of Baṭālā. *B41*, f. 142b.
[3] This is expressed in the form of a brief verse.
　　age hūā ab bhī hoi   ık kambīrā nānak doi
　　tījā hor handāl jaṭeṭā   jānko āp nirañjan bheṭā
　　aisī kirapā karī kambīr   to dujai nānak bandhī dhīr
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　B41, f. 166b.
[4] *B41*, f. 189a.
[5] *B41*, f. 251a–b. This third element, although certainly a part of the same polemic, may be a later addition to the *Bālā* narrative.

The first theory concerning the origins of the *Bālā* tradition interprets these references as interpolations introduced into an earlier 'original' janam-sākhī narrated before Gurū Aṅgad. This theory was popularized by the early nineteenth-century Sikh hagiographer Santokh Singh, who thereby managed to reconcile the tradition's occasional Hindālī declarations with its confident claims to originality.[1] It was a relatively simple matter to excise the offending material, and having done this Santokh Singh used the *Bālā* version as the basis for his *Nānak Prakāś*.[2] Numerous successors have followed the same method, some confidently and some with evident misgivings.

A second theory claims that the entire janam-sākhī is the work of the Hindālīs and that it was first composed to serve as a vehicle for their polemic against the supporters of the orthodox line. This interpretation was vigorously if erratically propagated by Karam Singh in his *Kattak ki Visākh*, a book which in spite of its manifold inconsistencies did serve to strengthen doubts which had been raised by Macauliffe.

The first of these two theories must certainly be rejected. The reasons for this rejection will be treated in greater detail when discussing the sources used by janam-sākhī compilers.[3] At this point they need be only briefly summarized. There are, first, the numerous and irreconcilable inconsistencies involved in the tradition's own account of its origins. Secondly, there is the unusually strong element of fantasy which characterizes the *Bālā* version of the Nānak narratives. Thirdly, there is a significant absence of any reference to Bhāī Bālā in the other janam-sākhīs predating the eighteenth century. Even in the eighteenth century he receives only passing mention in other traditions.[4] This would have been inconceivable if in fact Bālā had been a regular companion of the Gurū. Their omission of his name further strengthens a conclusion which is already apparent from the first two objections. In terms of content, structure, and language the earliest *Bālā* version bears all the marks of a middle period in the pattern of janam-sākhī evolution and theories based upon its claim to originality must assuredly be repudiated.

Whilst this disposes of the first theory it does not necessarily mean that the second thereby stands affirmed. It does not follow that Karam Singh's alternative theory is automatically established by a repudiation of the claims which he so vigorously contested. Karam Singh insisted that the earliest extant versions represent an original Hindālī composition, not an earlier janam-sākhī corrupted by them. The incidence of the Hindālī references does, however, offer some support for the suggestion that they must be interpolations and it is accordingly necessary to postulate a third theory. The earliest extant versions of the *Bālā* traditions may represent a

---

[1] *NPr* I. 37.   [2] See below, pp. 45–6.   [3] See below, pp. 174–6.
[4] The *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak* makes a single mention of Bhāī Bālā in its account of the life of Nānak, one which accords him no special importance. *SLTGN(Eng)*, p. 79. *SLTGN(Pbi)*, p. 42. At one point the *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs* versions, following a common source, refer to 'another man' who was with Nānak in addition to Mardānā, a reference which might perhaps be intended to indicate Bālā. *B40*, f. 83b. *AS*, p. 27. The failure of Bhāī Gurdās to mention him in his *Vār* xi catalogue of principal disciples is of particular significance.

mid-seventeenth-century janam-sākhī interpolated by the Hindālīs. This remains no more than a possibility, for there is no manuscript evidence to support it, and if it is in fact correct the Hindālīs must have made use of it very soon after its first emergence. Either this or the second theory could be correct and if the Hindālīs were not actually responsible for the first *Bālā* compilation they must certainly have appropriated it almost immediately after it appeared.[1]

It will be observed that in describing the products of the *Bālā* tradition reference is made to the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs, not to a single *Bālā Janam-sākhī*. Although there is an obvious relationship linking all versions of the tradition, with much common material, there are also marked differences. These are almost certainly linear in the sense that the various versions can be regarded as successive amplifications of an original *Bālā* janam-sākhī, first recorded in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. There are two principal manuscript recensions extant, followed by four main printed versions. Although the latest of the printed editions differs greatly from the first manuscript recension the lineal connection can be easily traced. The one link which may still be missing from the chain is the first. Whereas one of the extant manuscript recensions *may* represent the first *Bālā* version there is no conclusive means of establishing this status.

Manuscripts

1. *Bālā MS Recension A   Recension A* can be easily distinguished from *Recension B* by its omission of sākhīs describing the death of Nānak. There seems to be little doubt that *A* must be earlier than *B*. The earliest of all extant *Bālā* manuscripts bearing a date follows the *A* text, and the inclusion of death sākhīs adds one further inconsistency to the narrative. The introduction attached to all versions relates that Bhāī Bālā was unaware of the identity of Bābā Nānak's successor, an ignorance which would have been altogether inexplicable had he been present at the time of Nānak's death. The editor responsible for *Recension B*, taking cognisance of this fact, has Qurū Aṅgad narrate the death sākhīs for Bhāī Bālā's benefit. In order to do so, however, he borrows a significant portion of his account from a janam-sākhī of the *Miharbān* tradition. This brands the passage as a later addition, and implies that the briefer *Recension A* version must be earlier.

The earliest of all dated *Bālā* janam-sākhīs is a manuscript in the possession of a Delhi family, an illustrated copy bearing the date S.1715 (A.D. 1658).[2] Two of the three *Bālā* manuscripts in London also follow the

---

[1] The case in favour of an original Hindālī composition has recently been restated in a more developed form by Gurbachan Kaur, 'Janam Sākhī of Bhāī Bālā: authentic text and its critical editing' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Gurū Nānak Dev University, 1978). Dr. Gurbachan Kaur identifies Bālā with the elder son of Bābā Hindāl.

[2] The actual manuscript is in the possession of Shrī P. N. Kapoor of Hauz Qazi, Delhi. A photocopy is held by the Department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Paṭiālā. An abbreviated text is given in Kirpāl Singh, *Janam Sākhī Paramparā* (Paṭiālā, 1969), Appendix, pp. 221–329. See also Rattan Singh Jaggī, *Dasam Granth dā paurāṇik adhiain* (Jalandhar, 1965), p. 59.

Recension A text. The better of the two is the India Office Library manuscript Panj. B41. This consists of two parts, the first being the janam-sākhī proper (folios 1–253a) and the second a version of the two discourses entitled *Makke dī goṣṭi* and *Madīne dī goṣṭi* (folios 254a–348a, 348b–95). Between the two sections a shabad in *Gaurī* rāga has been inserted. The copyist is named Ṭhākur Dās Faqīr and both portions of the work are said to have been completed in S.1831–2 (A.D. 1775).[1] The second London representative of the tradition is the British Library's manuscript Or. 2754.1. This is undated and omits the story of how Gurū Nānak asked Gurū Aṅgad to send his daughter to him.[2] Although it has been copied by various hands on inferior paper it is generally clear.

2. *Bālā MS Recension B*   This version, with its *Miharbān* death adden-dum, is represented by MS 104975 of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, and also by MS Add. 921 of the Cambridge University Library. Both are recent works. The London manuscript is dated S.1912 (A.D. 1855) and the Cambridge manuscript S.1922 (A.D. 1865). An example noted in the Pañjāb by Professor Piār Singh is manuscript no. 342 of the Pañjāb Archives in Paṭiālā.[3]

These are the two principal recensions available in manuscript form. Needless to say, a comparison of any two manuscripts will reveal many variants, some of them substantial.[4] These variants do not, however, upset the pattern of a relatively mature janam-sākhī emerging with strong Hindālī associations in the middle of the seventeenth century and sub-sequently augmented by the addition of sākhīs narrating a version of Nānak's death. Of all janam-sākhīs this is the most common. In his catalogue of Pañjābī manuscripts Ashok has listed twenty-two *Bālā* manuscripts.[5] This catalogue relates exclusively to the Pañjāb. It does not include the Delhi and United Kingdom manuscripts noted above, nor a *Bālā* manuscript in the possession of Mr Jan Nielsen of Denmark.[6]

---

[1] The first is dated Māgh *sudī* 13, S. 1831; and the second portion Vaisākh *sudī* 4, S. 1832. Loc. cit., ff. 253b, 395b

[2] See above, p. 17.

[3] Piār Singh in *AS*, Introduction. p. xxxv.

[4] Other sākhīs added to the original *Recension A* collection by later copyists are noted by Gurbachan Kaur, op. cit, Appendix.

[5] *PHLS* i. 342–9 and ii. 224–9, 235–6. The distribution of the manuscripts is as follows: Library of the former Mahārājā of Paṭiālā (6 MSS). Languages Department, Paṭiālā (3). Central Public Library, Paṭiālā (3). Pañjāb Archives, Paṭiālā (2). Pañjāb University, Chaṇḍīgaṛh (2). Dr. Gaṇḍā Singh, Paṭiālā (2). Pañjābī Sāhit Ākādemī, Ludhiānā (1). Central Sikh Museum, Amritsar (1). Professor Prītam Singh, Amritsar (1). Sardār Shamsher Singh Ashok, Amritsar (1). Two manu-scripts not noticed by Ashok are held by Khalsa College, Amritsar. Kirpāl Singh (ed.), *A Catalogue of Punjabi and Urdu Manuscripts in the Sikh History Research Department* (Amritsar, 1963), pp. 16–17. Both are nineteenth-century manuscripts.

[6] A microfilm copy of this manuscript is held by Punjabi University, Paṭiālā. The original, which was copied in Multān in S. 1884 (A.D. 1827), bears the following note signed by Mr. Rich. Ash. Hannaford: 'The Ghrunt of the Seikhs. Taken from the altar in one of their temples by Lieut: G: Moxon. Given to me by Mrs. Moxon Dec: 22, 1851.'

Printed editions

The printing of janam-sākhīs appears to have begun in 1870. In October of that year the owners of the Ganesh Prakash Press in Lahore issued a composite volume comprising three Sikh works lithographed in the Arabic script. The second of these was a version of the *Bālā* narrative, a popular retelling which plainly derived from a Gurmukhī original.[1]

The Gurmukhī version was not far behind and within months the dominant *Bālā* text had followed the 1870 forerunner into print. In 1871 a generally faithful replica of the *Recension A* Gurmukhī text was issued by another Lahore publisher, establishing thereby a firm link between the earlier manuscripts and the progressively expanding versions delivered by printing presses. During this same year the process of expansion was given a substantial impetus by the appearance of an extensively augmented version. The process continued into the twentieth century, each successive product claiming to represent the authentic text delivered by Bālā Sandhū to Gurū Aṅgad. The four Gurmukhī versions which constitute this developing sequence are as follows:

1. *Bālā Lithographed Edition A* (A.D. 1871)   This edition, published in Lahore by Hāfaz Qutub Dīn, establishes the firm link with earlier *Bālā* manuscripts. Most of its text follows that of *Bālā MS Recension A* closely and thus effects only a slight advance in the expansion process. For this reason, and because it is more accessible than manuscript copies, this Hāfiz Qutub Dīn edition (*Bālā Lithographed Edition A*) will be used for most *Bālā* citations in this study.[2] It should, however, be noted that some significant variants do occur. These are set out in Appendix 1, together with a list of all *Recension A* and *Lithographed Edition A* sākhīs.[3]

2. *Bālā Lithographed Edition B* (A.D. 1871)   The second of the 1871 editions is a much larger product, both in actual dimensions and in content. As indicated above, this second 1871 edition marks the first significant stage in the rapid and substantial expansion which transformed the *Bālā* tradition during the last three decades of the nineteenth century and created the twentieth-century *Bālā Janam-sākhī* still so popular in Pañjāb villages. From this point of view it commands a considerable interest, although it is of no help as a source for the primary period of

---

[1] The three works which comprise the volume are *Japjī paramārath* (50 pp.), *Pothī janam-sākhī* (114 pp.), and *Gur-bilās* (44 pp.). Each appears to have been lithographed as a separate booklet and the three subsequently bound as a single volume. The October 1870 date is recorded on the cover and evidently refers to the issue of the complete volume. A copy is held by the IOL (call number: VT 1552).

[2] It is to this edition that the abbreviation *Bālā JS* applies. The copy in the India Office Library is catalogued as Panj. 1522. The India Office Library also holds two later editions of the same version, one published in A.D. 1874 (Panj. 30.E.3) and the other in A.D. 1886 (Panj. 1523). The book is relatively small, measuring 25 × 15 cm.

[3] See below, pp. 271-5.

janam-sākhī development during the seventeenth century. The edition was published by Mālik Dīvān Būṭā Singh of Lahore.[1]

3. *Bālā Lithographed Edition C* (A.D. 1890)   The *Bālā* tradition was further expanded by an even weightier volume published in 1890 by Maulvī Maibūb Ahmad of Lahore.[2]

4. *Bālā Letterpress Edition*   The climax was finally reached with the twentieth-century letterpress edition which still sells well in the bazaar bookshops of the Pañjāb.[3] The first of the lithographed editions described above contains 90 sākhīs, the second jumps to 311, and the third leaps still further to 495. In the standard modern letterpress version the number is reduced to 183 by amalgamating earlier sākhīs. Some portions have been omitted, extra material has been added, and there has been some rearrangement, but the pattern of linear descent is still clear.

THE PURĀTAN *JANAM-SĀKHĪS*

Having established its supremacy during the course of the eighteenth century the *Bālā* tradition remained the standard account of the life of Nānak for more than a hundred years. It was only in 1872 that a serious rival reappeared, and it was not until the early twentieth century that this rival tradition began to make any serious impression upon the *Bālā* reputation. Because it was alleged by some of its promoters to be the oldest of all versions this variant account of the life of Nānak was dubbed the *Purātan* or 'Ancient' tradition.

The term *Purātan Janam-sākhī*, which has ever since been used with reference to this second major tradition, is misleading in two respects. It is misleading because it implies (and the claim has sometimes been expressed in explicit terms) that this must be the original janam-sākhī. The claim that the *Purātan* version represents the oldest of all *extant* accounts may perhaps be accurate. It is certainly disputable, but the possibility must be acknowledged. What is not acceptable is the suggestion that the *Purātan* tradition represents an 'original' janam-sākhī. The *Purātan* tradition is, like all extant janam-sākhī collections, a composite version based upon more than one antecedent source.

The term is also misleading in that its use of the singular implies the existence of a single *Purātan* janam-sākhī. This too is incorrect. As in the case of the *Bālā* tradition there is more than one *Purātan* janam-sākhī, and it is because more than one exists that the heading given above for this section uses a plural form. The intimate relationship which connects the various *Purātan* janam-sākhīs cannot be doubted and for this reason they

---

[1] IOL Panj. 31.I.9. A reprint was issued in A.D. 1890 (IOL Panj. 31.I.7).

[2] IOL Panj. 31.I.10.

[3] IOL Panj. H.18 is an example. The best available copies are those published by Munshī Gulāb Singh and Sons of Lahore.

are here grouped within a single definable tradition. This grouping should not, however, suggest identity. The terms '*Purātan* janam-sākhīs' and '*Purātan* tradition' serve as convenient collective labels, whereas the singular form, the *Purātan Janam-sākhī*, must be restricted to the published text which bears this misleading title.[1] In addition to this and an earlier published text three of the more important *Purātan* manuscripts will be noted. Two of these manuscripts (the *Colebrooke* and the *Hāfizābād*) have enjoyed a particular fame. This they owe not to their dates (which are unknown) nor to any uniqueness of text, but rather to the manner of their discovery and to the fact that the names bestowed upon them have also been used to designate the two principal recensions of the *Purātan* tradition. The third manuscript, likewise undated but obviously later than its more celebrated analogues, deserves notice because it illustrates so well the persistent tendency of copyists to expand earlier collections.

Manuscripts

1. *The Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*   In 1869 the Pañjāb Government com-missioned Ernst Trumpp to translate the sacred scripture of the Sikhs.[2] Although Trumpp's responsibility was limited to the Ādi Granth he was naturally interested in surviving traditions concerning the lives of the Gurūs, and specifically those relating to Nānak. Knowledge of the Nānak traditions was largely confined to the *Bālā* version and because this version seemed to him to be so unsatisfactory Trumpp endeavoured to procure older and more trustworthy traditions regarding the life of Nānak. In India his search was unsuccessful, but after his return to Europe he chanced upon a manuscript which seemed to answer his need.

After my return to Europe in 1872, some manuscripts of the Granth were forwarded to me from the India Office Library, for the prosecution of my labours, and to these some other Gurmukhi manuscripts were added in the expectation that the one or the other might prove useful in my researches. In looking them over, I found an old manuscript, partly destroyed by white ants, the early characters of which, resembling those of the old copy of the Granth, preserved at Kartarpur, and signed by Guru Arjun himself, at once caught my eye. On the first leaf it contained in Sanskrit letters the short title, *Nanak ka Granth Jana-masakhi ka, A book of Nanak, referring to his birth (or life)*. The copy had been presented to the Library of the East India House, according to the entry on the first leaf, by the famous H. T. Colebrooke, without his being aware, as it appears, of the contents of the book. As soon as I commenced to read the book, I observed with great pleasure, that this was a description of the life of Nanak quite different from all the others I had hitherto seen. As the characters, so also was the idiom, in which it was composed, old and in many words and expressions agreeing with the diction of Guru Arjun.
     After a lengthened examination and comparison of this manuscript with the later Janam-sakhis, I am satisfied that this is the fountain, from which all the others have been drawn largely: for the stories, as far as they are common to both

[1] See below, pp. 28–9.   [2] E. Trumpp, *The Ādi Granth* (London, 1877), p. III.

relations, very frequently agree verbally, with the only difference, that the later Janam-sakhis have substituted more modern forms for old words, which with the progress of time had become unintelligible. This old Janam-sakhi, as hinted already, belongs, according to all external and internal marks, to the latter end of the time of Guru Arjun or to that of his immediate successor. The Granth, which Guru Arjun compiled of the writings of his four predecessors and the old famous Bhagats, as well as of his own numerous poetical effusions, is cited throughout, without any paraphrase, whereas the later Janam-sakhis have deemed it already necessary to add to every quotation from the Granth a paraphrase in the modern idiom.

We are enabled now, by the discovery of this old Janam-sakhi, which is now-a-days, as it appears, quite unknown to the Sikhs themselves, to distinguish the older tradition regarding Nanak from the later one, and to fix, with some degree of verisimility, the real facts of his life.[1]

Although Trumpp was astray in his estimate of the age and reliability of the manuscript there can be no doubt that he had discovered one of the most important of the janam-sākhīs. H. T. Colebrooke had presumably presented the manuscript to the Library of East India House in 1815 or 1816. In English works it is commonly referred to as the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*, and in Pañjābī references as the *Valāitvālī Janam-sākhī*, or 'the janam-sākhī from overseas'.[2] The manuscript is almost complete, the only missing folios being 2–6, 12–13, and 18–19.

Trumpp had, in the manner of late nineteenth-century religious polemic, made some exceedingly discourteous remarks about the Sikh sacred scriptures and for this reason his book was ill received by the community when it was published in 1877.[3] His description and translation of the rediscovered janam-sākhī did, however, arouse considerable interest and in 1883 a group of Amritsar Sikhs petitioned the Lieutenant-Governor of the Pañjāb to have the manuscript brought to India for inspection. Sir Charles Aitcheson accepted the request and in the autumn of the same year the manuscript was sent to the Pañjāb. There it was made available for scrutiny in Lahore and Amritsar, where interest was sufficiently marked to persuade Sir Charles to have it reproduced. This was done by means of a zincographic process in 1885 and copies bearing the title *Janam Sakhi or the Biography of Guru Nanak, Founder of the Sikh Religion* were presented to selected institutions as gifts.[4] In the meantime a transcribed copy had been prepared and lithographed by the Singh Sabhā of Lahore.[5]

Although the manuscript bears no date for either an original compilation or the actual copying, a cryptic reference in the sākhī 'Jhaṇḍā the Carpenter and the *Jugāvalī*' points to the year A.D. 1635.[6] It is possible

---

[1] Ibid., p. ii.   [2] The manuscript is IOL MS Panj. B6.

[3] For examples of his opinion see E. Trumpp. op. cit., pp. VI–VIII, i–ii; and N. Gerald Barrier, *The Sikhs and their Literature*, (Delhi, 1970), pp. xix–xx.

[4] Loc. cit., prefatory note, p. ii. Because the reproduction was carried out at the Survey of India offices in Dehrā Dūn the *Colebrooke* version is sometimes referred to as the *Dehrā Dūn Vālī Janam-sākhī*. The India Office Library copy is catalogued as Panj. 30.E.4.

[5] IOL Panj. 30.E.2.   [6] *Pur JS*, p. 116n.

that this reference is intended to indicate the year in which the *Purātan* version was first compiled, and there can be no doubt that a janam-sākhī of the *Purātan* variety might well have been recorded at that time. A reference of this kind is, however, slender evidence. It occurs in the apocryphal *Jugāvali* (a work borrowed by the *Colebrooke* compiler from one of his sources), and it does not appear in all other *Purātan* manuscripts. The reference may relate to an original compilation, or to a later recension, or to a particular part of the composite *Purātan* tradition. Another possibility is that it may be entirely spurious. It occurs as an obscure reference within an esoteric work, circumstances which are scarcely favourable to positive conclusions. The text bears all the marks of an early seventeenth-century janam-sākhī, but beyond this supposition it is impossible to proceed. The actual manuscript is evidently later than this period. This conclusion is suggested by the salutation with which the manuscript concludes: *bolahu vāhi gurū jī kī fatai hoi.*[1] There is no evidence to suggest that this formula was used prior to the time of Gurū Gobind Siṅgh, from which it follows that the manuscript was probably copied during the early eighteenth century.

2. *The Hāfiẓābād Janam-sākhī* In 1884 Gurmukh Singh of Oriental College, Lahore, acquired a second *Purātan* manuscript from the town of Hāfiẓābād in Gujranwālā District. This manuscript he loaned to M. A. Macauliffe, who, having separated the individual words of the unbroken text, had it published at his own expense in 1885.[2] This version is variously known as the *Hāfiẓābād Janam-sākhī* or as the *Macauliffe-vālī Janam-sākhī*.

The *Hāfiẓābād* text differs from the *Colebrooke* version in three significant respects. First, it includes in addition to all the *Colebrooke* material (which it reproduces with minor variants) a small cluster of two consecutive sākhīs, neither of which appears in the *Colebrooke* analogue. These are the anecdotes entitled 'The Proud Karoṛī Humbled' and 'The Merchant and Rājā Śivanābh'.[3] Secondly, it contains a discourse with Bābur which the *Colebrooke* text lacks.[4] Thirdly, it omits the three lengthy compositions entitled *Āsā Paṭṭī*, the *Jugāvali*, and the *Prāṇ Saṅgali*.[5] One other difference reported by Gurmukh Singh in his introduction to the lithographed edition is that there were some folios missing from the end of the manuscript. In order to complete the text Macauliffe used the *Colebrooke* manuscript.[6]

Macauliffe's decision to publish a lithographed edition of the *Hāfiẓābād Janam-sākhī* was particularly fortunate in that the original manuscript is now no longer extant. When Gurmukh Singh died in 1896 his collection of

[1] Ibid., p. 115.

[2] *Janam Sākhī Bābe Nānak Jī kī: the Most Ancient Biography of Baba Nanak, the Founder of the Sikh Religion*, edited by M. A. Macauliffe, lithographed by the Gulashan Press, Rāwalpiṇḍī, 15 November 1885, with introduction by Gurmukh Singh.

[3] Ibid., pp. 184–97. *Pur JS*, pp. 73–8.

[4] M. A. Macauliffe, op. cit., pp. 163–7. *Pur JS*, pp. 65–7.

[5] M. A. Macauliffe, op. cit., introduction, p. 9.　　　　　　[6] Ibid.

manuscripts passed to his widow Parameshari Devī; and when she died in 1923 they came into the possession of his adoptive nephew. The nephew's possession was disputed (presumably by other relatives of Gurmukh Singh) and although a court decision was delivered in his favour he evidently decided to dispose of the property which threatened to involve him in further litigation. This he did by casting the manuscripts into the Rāvī river. No inventory of the manuscripts exists, but it is presumed that the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī* must have been amongst them.[1]

In addition to the Macauliffe text at least two other extant manuscripts follow the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī* version of the *Purātan* narrative. These are manuscript number 2913 of the Central Public Library, Paṭiālā, and manuscript number 2310A in the Sikh History Research Department of Khalsa College, Amritsar.[2] The Paṭiālā manuscript is dated S.1747 (A.D. 1690)[3] and the Khalsa College manuscript S.1829 (A.D. 1772).[4]

Other manuscripts are distinguished by their use of both *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād*. An example of this pattern is provided by a *Purātan* manuscript dated S.1814 (A.D. 1757), copied in Burdwan and now in the possession of Sardār Kuldīp Singh Bedī of Baṭālā. This manuscript is much closer to *Colebrooke* than to *Hāfizābād* and is best classified as an example of the former. It does, however, include occasional readings which have evidently been adapted from a *Hāfizābād* source.[5]

3. *The Prāchīn Janam-sākhī*   The title *Prāchīn Janam-sākhī* designates a manuscript in the possession of a private collector, Sevā Singh Sevak of Tarn Tāran. This manuscript represents a relatively late and substantially expanded *Purātan* collection. Although no date is given it is evident from the language and structure of the collection that the seventeenth-century estimate suggested by its owner must be too early.[6]

The bulk of the manuscript consists of *Purātan* material, rearranged in places but plainly attesting its basic source. To this foundation have been added sākhīs drawn from several other sources. Only a few of these have been introduced into the *Purātan* sequence. Most have been added at its

---

[1] Information supplied by Sardār Shamsher Singh Ashok of Amritsar, who reports having learnt it while scrutinizing the Lahore Siṅgh Sabhā records in 1945.

[2] Piār Singh, op. cit., pp. 83–4. Kirpāl Singh, op. cit., pp. 11–12. *PHLS* i.340.

[3] Loc. cit., f. 276b. The manuscript is said to have been copied at Galgalā. The copyist adds: 'Galgalā is twelve *kos* from Bijāpur on the Kistna river. . . . It was written in the south, in the camp of Nauraṅg Pātśāh [Aurangzeb].' Ibid.

[4] Loc. cit., f. 185. Kirpāl Singh, op. cit., p. 12.

[5] Two other complete *Purātan* manuscripts and two fragments are *PHLS* i.340 and ii.225, 230. Ashok reports two additional *Purātan* manuscripts located after the compilation of *PHLS*, one in Ferozepore District and the other in Hoshiārpur District. Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Purātan Janam-sākhī Srī Gurū Nānak Dev Jī kī* (Amritsar, 1969), introduction, p. 46. He also reports having seen 'several *Purātan* janam-sākhīs' in Lahore prior to Partition in 1947. Ibid., p. 45. Karam Singh, writing in 1913, claimed to have seen five *Purātan* manuscripts in addition to *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād*, and to have received a report concerning a sixth. Karam Singh, *Kattak kī Visākh* (Amritsar, 1913), p. 218. It seems certain that one of these must have been the *B40 Janam-sākhī* (see below, p. 43). and in view of the looseness with which the term *Purātan* is used it is likely that other manuscripts to which this title has been applied may have been misnamed.

[6] Sevā Singh Sevak (ed.), *Prāchīn Janam Sākhī* (Jalandhar, 1969), introduction, pp. 28, 35.

conclusion.[1] A variety of sources lie behind these supplementary sākhīs. Several obviously derive from two major traditions unknown to the *Purātan* compilers but extensively used in some other janam-sākhīs.[2] The *Miharbān* tradition (discussed below) is well represented by several lengthy discourses, grouped within four sākhīs.[3] A cluster which plainly derives from a *Bālā* source manages to avoid all reference to the person of Bhāī Bālā.[4] Another cluster appears to be unique to the *Prāchīn Janam-sākhī*.[5] The manuscript also includes a version of the apocryphal 'Mecca Discourse'.[6]

Authorship and dating of the Purātan version

In *The Sikh Religion* Macauliffe states that the *Purātan* version 'was written by a Sikh called Sewa Das'.[7] He claims to have obtained 'several copies', and adds: 'One of them in our possession bears the date Sambat 1645 = A.D. 1588.'[8] The first of these claims can be safely dismissed. Macauliffe himself acknowledges the information to be hearsay, no manuscript bearing this name exists, and it seems clear that Macauliffe's informant (Sir Attar Singh of Bhadaur) must have mistaken the identity of a writer of Gurū Gobind Siṅgh's period named Sevā Dās Udāsī.[9] The second is also open to considerable doubt. Apart from the *Hāfizābād* manuscript in its printed edition none of Macauliffe's 'several copies' seems to have survived, and it is highly unlikely that a janam-sākhī as maturely structured as the extant *Purātan* version could have evolved by 1588. It is possible that Macauliffe may have seen a manuscript bearing this date, but if so it will almost certainly have been a much more primitive collection than the extant version.

Other attempts to devise a date for the compiling of the *Purātan* tradition must be treated with the same scepticism, for no specifically dated

---

[1] Sākhīs 19, 33–6, and 51 have been interpolated; also portions of sākhīs 10, 41, and 53. The *Purātan* material concludes immediately prior to the *Purātan* account of Nānak's death, and the remaining sākhīs (58–81) are almost all taken from other sources. The sole exception is sākhī 80, a brief return to *Purātan* material immediately prior to the death sākhī.

[2] These are the so-called *Narrative II* and *Narrative III* traditions. (See below, pp. 197–226) The former had, on earlier occasions, been extensively used by the compilers of the *Ādi Sākhīs* and the *B40 Janam-sākhī*, both following a common source-manuscript. In its recorded form the latter can be traced to the *B40 Janam-sākhī*, and it is possible that the compiler of the *Prāchīn Janam-sākhī* actually copied his *Narrative III* sākhīs directly from the *B40* manuscript. His source was at least very close to the original *B40*. It is also possible that he may have had access to a late recension of the *Ādi Sākhīs*, for sources which are blended in the later *Ādi Sākhīs* appear in the same form in the *Prāchīn Janam-sākhī*. *Narrative II* sākhīs in the *Prāchīn Janam-sākhī* are 58, parts of 59, and 62–5. *Narrative III* sākhīs are 71 and 75–9. Other sākhīs which may have been derived from the *B40 Janam-sākhī* are parts of 10 and 41, 51, 66–70, and 81.

[3] Sākhīs 19, parts of 59, 60–1.   [4] Sākhīs 72–4.   [5] Sākhīs 33–6.

[6] Sevā Siṅgh Sevak, op. cit., p. 174.   [7] Loc. cit. i.lxxxvi.   [8] Ibid.

[9] Sevā Dās Udāsī was the author of a collection of anecdotes entitled *Parchīān*, completed in A.D. 1708. Only one of these anecdotes (a version of the discourse on Mount Sumeru) refers to Bābā Nānak. Jagjīt Singh, 'A Critical and Comparative Study of the Janam Sakhis of Guru Nanak up to the Middle of the Eighteenth Century' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University, 1967), pp. 33–4. For the Pañjābī text of this anecdote see *SLTGN(Pbi)*, pp. 30–1.

reference survives. Calculations based on indirect references are of little help, except perhaps for the sākhī or poetic composition within which they occur. The extant *Purātan* version is, like all extant janam-sākhīs, a composite product and different portions have been incorporated at different times. A date within the middle decades of the seventeenth century may be assumed as highly probable but further than this it is not yet possible to go.

Printed editions

1. M. A. Macauliffe (ed.), *Janam Sākhī Bābe Nānak Jī kī*. Rawalpindi, 1885. This printed edition has already been briefly described in the section dealing with the *Hāfizābād* manuscript. According to Gurmukh Singh's introduction the lithographed text represents a faithful reproduction of the *Hāfizābād* manuscript, the only significant difference being the editor's separation of individual words, the addition of punctuation, and the terminal section drawn from the *Colebrooke* manuscript. Copies of this printed edition are now rare. The British Library possesses one,[1] but not the India Office Library. A few copies are still held privately and in libraries in the Pañjāb.

2. Vīr Singh (ed.), *Purātan Janam-sākhī*. In 1926 the distinguished Sikh novelist and theologian Bhāī Vīr Singh of Amritsar published a conflation of the *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād* versions under the title *Purātan Janam-sākhī*.[2] For this printed edition Vīr Singh took as his primary text the *Colebrooke* manuscript (using the zincographic reproduction) and added to it material included in the *Hāfizābād* manuscript which the *Colebrooke* manuscript lacked. For the portions covered by both manuscripts the more important of the *Hāfizābād* variant readings were listed in footnotes. This still left some gaps in the text, notably at the conclusion of the death sākhī. These Vīr Singh filled in his second edition (1931), by adding readings drawn from the *Purātan* manuscript in the possession of the Khalsa College Sikh History Research Department.[3] The three manuscripts were, like all Pañjābī manuscripts of this kind, written without gaps be ween individual words and with only rudimentary punctuation.

[1] BL 14162.c.14.

[2] Amritsar: Khālsā Samāchār. The complete title is *Huṇ tak milīān vichon sab ton Purātan Janam-sākhī Srī Gurū Nānak Dev Jī* ('The Earliest Extant Janam-sākhī of Srī Gurū Nānak Dev Jī'). Several subsequent editions have been issued by the same publisher and the book is still in print. The abbreviation *Pur JS* used in this study refers to the fifth edition of this work (February 1959). An abridged version appears in Kirpāl Singh, *Janam Sākhī Paramparā* (Paṭiālā, 1969), Appendix, pp. 1–57.

[3] One gap which still remained, and which can only be filled by speculation, is the prologue which evidently preceded the birth narrative in the *Colebrooke* manuscript. Although the extant manuscript begins with the birth of Nānak, the folio numbering indicates that five folios have been detached from the beginning of the manuscript. *Janam Sākhī or the Biography of Gurū Nānak* (Photozincograph Facsimile, Dehrā Dūn, 1885), Introduction, p. iii. These presumably recorded a pre-natal commissioning of Nānak by God in the manner of the introductory portions of the *Ādi Sākhīs* and the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*.

In the printed edition the individual words have been separated and additional punctuation provided.[1]

Three other features of this printed version should be noted. First, Vīr Singh has added headings to the individual sākhīs and also section headings to mark the commencement of each of the five journeys which according to the *Purātan* version Bābā Nānak is said to have made. Secondly, he has amended the narrator's numerous quotations from Nānak's own compositions in order to bring them into conformity with the Ādi Granth text. This frequently involves substantial changes in the *Purātan* text. Vīr Singh defends these amendments on the grounds that 'because the authentic text of the Gurū's utterances is that of the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* it would be offensive to print a corrupt text'.[2] Thirdly, he has omitted from his main text compositions attributed by the janam-sākhī to the Gurū which he regards as apocryphal. These he has relegated to a series of appendices.[3] The shorter compositions are there printed in full, but for the remainder (including the important *Prāṇ Saṅgalī*) only the opening stanzas are given.

3. Sevā Singh Sevak (ed.), *Prāchīn Janam-sākhī*. Jalandhar, 1969. This volume represents a printed edition of the third of the *Purātan* manu- scripts noted above. The text follows a brief Pañjābī introduction by the owner-editor.

4. Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Purātan Janam-sākhī Srī Gurū Nānak Dev Jī kī*. Amritsar, 1969. In spite of its title this recent publication is not strictly a *Purātan* text and it is included here only because claims to this status have been made on its behalf. It is, like Vīr Singh's *Purātan Janam- sākhī*, a conflation. Unlike Vīr Singh's version, however, the component texts are not all *Purātan*. Although the primary text has been provided by a *Purātan* manuscript the finished product contains much material derived from two non-*Purātan* manuscripts. It differs from the *Prāchīn Janam- sākhī* in that its non-*Purātan* sākhīs have been dispersed through the complete collection, extensively supplementing the *Purātan* content without disrupting its distinctive pattern. In the *Prāchīn Janam-sākhī* most of the non-*Purātan* sākhīs have been appended at the conclusion of the *Purātan* material.

Ashok has constructed his text in two stages. The first step was to conflate two *Ādi Sākhīs* texts (representatives of a separate tradition which is described below). These texts were taken from a manuscript in his own possession and from another in the library of the Mahārājā of Paṭiālā. The second step was to conflate this conflated *Ādi Sākhīs* text with the text of the *Purātan* manuscript in the possession of Sardār Kuldīp Singh Bedī of Baṭālā.[4] This *Purātan* text is basic in the sense that it supplies not only a

---

[1] *Pur JS*, Introduction, pp. *s–k*.   [2] Ibid., p. *h*.   [3] Ibid., pp. 116–20.
[4] Shamsher Singh Ashok (ed.), *Purātan Janam Sākhī Srī Gurū Nānak Dev Jī kī*, Introduction, pp. 13, 47. The two *Ādi Sākhīs* manuscripts are dated respectively S. 1791 (A.D. 1734) and S. 1758 (A.D. 1701). See below, p. 32. The *Purātan* manuscript is dated S. 1814 (A.D. 1757).

majority of the sākhīs but also the structure of the conflated product. In all *Purātan* manuscripts the narrative is distinguished by an ordering of the travel sākhīs into four major journeys, one to each of the four cardinal points of the compass, together with a minor journey to a place called Gorakh-haṭaṛī. This chronology has been retained by the editor and the extra sākhīs provided by the *Ādi Sākhīs* version have been introduced into this *Purātan* narrative individually or in clusters, at points which seemed appropriate.

Because the *Ādi Sākhīs* chronology disagrees with the *Purātan* pattern these supplementary sākhīs could not be interpolated in the same order as they appear in their *Ādi Sākhīs* form. In the case of common sākhīs, however, the editor has preferred their readings to that of his *Purātan* text. Wherever the *Purātan* and *Ādi Sākhīs* versions have sākhīs in common the conflated *Ādi Sākhīs* text has normally been used.[1] No indication of this is given in the printed text, the only manuscript identifications being occasional footnote references to variant readings. In a few places a passage included in one or more of the manuscripts has been omitted from the published text. An example is the *Ādi Sākhīs* explanation for Nānak's decision to visit the pilgrimage-centres.[2] The *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler, following a source used by other janam-sākhī compilers, records a tradition that Nānak's visit was in quest of a guru.[3] This passage, which should have been attached to the end of sākhī 17[4] or the beginning of sākhī 24,[5] was evidently omitted because the suggestion that Bābā Nānak should ever have sought a guru is now held to be offensive.

English translations

An English translation of the *Colebrooke* text is given by Trumpp in his introduction to his *The Ādi Granth*.[6] This rendering is exceedingly stilted and contains numerous inaccuracies. Much of the first volume of Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion* is a paraphrase of the *Purātan* narrative, but no indication is given of the points at which the author briefly moves away from his principal source.

A list of the sākhīs included in the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs is given in Appendix 2.[7]

THE ĀDI SĀKHĪS

At some unspecified date prior to the partition of India in 1947 Dr Mohan Singh Dewana of Punjab University, Lahore, discovered in the Uni-

---

[1] Both versions of the 'Death of Nanak' sākhī are given. Loc. cit., pp. 191–3 (*Ādi Sākhīs* version) and pp. 193–6 (*Purātan* version).

[2] *AS*, p. 23.

[3] *B40*, f. 76b. *Mih JS* 1.111. For a note on the common source see below, pp. 198–205.

[4] Shamsher Singh Ashok (ed.), op. cit., p. 40.   [5] Ibid., p. 52.

[6] Loc. cit., pp. vii–xlv. For a summary paraphrase of the *Purātan* narrative (*Hāfizābād* as well as *Colebrooke*) see *GNSR*, pp. 36–51.

[7] See below, pp. 276–7.

versity's library a janam-sākhī manuscript which recorded a version different from any of the extant traditions. This collection he named the *Ādi Sākhīs*, or 'First Collection of Sākhīs'.[1] Mohan Singh did not make a complete copy of the manuscript and efforts to trace it made in early 1969 proved unsuccessful.[2] In the meantime, however, four manuscript copies of the same collection had been located on the Indian side of the border by Professor Piār Singh of Punjabi University, Paṭiālā, and in October 1969 Piār Singh published a printed edition of the text.[3]

The name chosen by Mohan Singh for this collection is misleading, for it implies a precedence which in fact the janam-sākhī does not possess. This is made clear by an analysis of its contents. At least three distinct sources can be recognized,[4] and from the material provided by these sources the compiler of the collection has fashioned a coherent travel itinerary. These are features of a relatively mature janam-sākhī and any theory that the *Ādi Sākhīs* represent a 'first' collection must be rejected.

The composite nature of the *Ādi Sākhīs* collection must also prompt a measure of caution in attempting to place the janam-sākhī within any reconstructed sequence of janam-sākhīs. It has, for example, been argued that a reference to Akbar which is repeated in the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* indicates that the *Ādi Sākhīs* is earlier than the *Miharbān* collection.[5] The portion of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* in which this reference appears claims to be a product of the year S.1707 (A.D. 1650),[6] and because the Akbar reference in the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* appears to be later than the *Ādi Sākhīs* version it would seem to follow that the *Ādi Sākhīs* must antedate the middle of the seventeenth century. In fact, however, both the *Ādi Sākhīs* and the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* in their earliest extant forms are the products of a continuing process of expansion. Whereas on the one hand there can be no doubt that the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* embodies borrowings from the *Ādi Sākhīs*, on the other there seems to be little question that the extant *Ādi Sākhīs* includes reciprocal borrowings from the *Miharbān* tradition. The Akbar reference appears to be one of the latter, taken not from the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* but from an earlier recension.[7]

---

[1] Mohan Singh's information is dispersed over several publications, summarized by Piār Singh in *AS*, pp. ix–xi. The copyist's name is given as Sibhū (or Śambhū) Nāth Brāhmaṇ and the manuscript's number as PUL 4141.

[2] Failure to locate the manuscript does not necessarily mean that it has been lost. The Gurmukhī manuscripts held by Punjab University, Lahore, are said to be in a condition of total confusion at present.

[3] See below, p. 33.   [4] See below, pp. 219–20.

[5] Piār Singh, 'A Critical Survey of Panjabi Prose in the Seventeenth Century' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University, Chaṇḍīgaṛh, 1968), pp. 94–5. *AS*, Introduction, p. *xlviii*. The *AS* reference reads: *ihu sākhī akbar pātisāhu suṇī thī*. 'The Emperor Akbar heard this sākhī.' *AS*, p. 90. The longer *Miharbān* version reads: *eh sākhī akbar pātisāh kari sunāī thī. jab gurū arjun lahauri āi miliā thā pātisāh kau*. 'The Emperor Akbar heard this sākhī related. [This happened] when Gurū Arjan visited Lahore to meet the Emperor Akbar.' *Mih JS* II.137.

[6] *Mih JS* II.357.

[7] See below, pp. 212–14. Piār Singh actually carries the date of the *Ādi Sākhīs* compilation as far back as a period preceding the compilation of the Ādi Granth (A.D. 1603–4), adding to the argument set out above the claim that anything later than this period would have utilized Bhāī Gurdās's

This cannot be affirmed in categorical terms, but it does at least demonstrate the perils of seeking to date janam-sākhīs on the basis of isolated references. The only positive assertions which may be regarded as permissible are, first, that the original *Ādi Sākhīs* collection must have been compiled during the seventeenth century; and secondly, that it incorporates material from earlier sources. The first is a safe assumption because two of the extant manuscripts bear dates corresponding to A.D. 1701 and both are evidently copies of an earlier manuscript.

Manuscript copies

The four manuscripts known to exist in Indian Pañjāb are located in the following places:
(1) Sikh Reference Library, Amritsar. MS no. S462.
(2) The library of the Mahārājā of Paṭiālā in Moti Bāgh Palace, Paṭiālā.
(3) The personal library of Sardār Shamsher Singh Ashok of Amritsar.
(4) Central Public Library, Paṭiālā. MS no. 495.[1]
Of these only the first two correspond in arrangement and content to the Lahore collection reported by Mohan Singh. Sardār Ashok's manuscript is limited to twenty-five of the thirty sākhīs included in the older manuscripts,[2] and the remaining manuscript records the *Ādi Sākhīs* anecdotes as part of a much larger collection.[3] The undated manuscript held by the Sikh Reference Library lacks its first five folios, but is otherwise complete.[4] Only one folio is missing from the Moti Bāgh copy. This manuscript is dated S.1758 (A.D. 1701), six months earlier than the Lahore manuscript.[5] Both manuscripts number their sākhīs up to thirty, but both have at different places overlooked a sākhī in the process.[6] Several of the sākhīs are composite and contain two or more separate anecdotes.

work and so would have included the anecdote which Bhāī Gurdās sets in Multān. *AS*, Introduction, p. *xlviii*. For Bhāī Gurdās and the Multān anecdote see below, pp. 118–20. With the sole exception of the *Gyān-ratanāvalī* none of the later janam-sākhīs use Bhāī Gurdās in this manner. The *B40 Janam-sākhī*, compiled in A.D. 1733, also omits Bhāī Gurdās's Multān anecdote.

[1] *AS*, Introduction, pp. *x–xii*. Jagjīt Singh claims that there is also a copy in the possession of 'S. Kundan Singh, a close friend of S. Randhir Singh, Department of Historical Studies, Panjabi (*sic*) University, Patiala'. 'A Critical and Comparative Study of the Janam Sakhis of Guru Nanak' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University, 1967), p. 31.

[2] Shamsher Singh Ashok (ed.), *Purātan Janam Sākhī Srī Gurū Nānak Dev Jī kī* (Amritsar, 1969), pp. 11–12. Ashok's manuscript is dated S. 1791 (A.D. 1734). He reports having obtained it from Bhāī Kirpā Singh Darzī of Guārā Upoke village. The manuscript contains twenty-five of the thirty sākhīs recorded in the longer versions. Ibid., p. 45.

[3] *AS*, Introduction, pp. *xi–xii*.

[4] The pagination begins with the figure 6. This, however, is not the original numbering. The fourth folio of the extant text also bears, in an earlier text hand, the number 167. From this it is evident that the manuscript must originally have been part of a larger manuscript and it can be assumed that the *Ādi Sākhīs* portion must have commenced on folio 159. The extant manuscript concludes with folio 155 of the later numbering.

[5] *sammat 1758 māh asāṛ badī 13*. Mohan Singh reported the date of the Lahore manuscript as *sammat 1758 poh sudī 1*. *AS*, Introduction, p. *xi*. Ashok's manuscript is dated S. 1791 (A.D. 1734) and the Central Public Library manuscript S. 1813 (A.D. 1756). Ibid., pp. *xi–xii*.

[6] Sikh Reference Library manuscript no. 5462, f. 35b. *AS*, p. 81.

Printed edition

Piār Singh's printed edition of the *Ādi Sākhīs* was issued in 1969 under the title *Śambhū Nāth Vālī Janam Patrī Bābe Nānak Jī kī prasidh nān Ādi Sākhīān.*[1] In preparing this edition the editor followed the Motī Bāgh text supplementing it where necessary with the Sikh Reference Library manuscript. Footnotes have been added to indicate variant readings in the texts of the Sikh Reference Library and Ashok manuscripts. A list of the janam-sākhī's contents as printed in this edition is given in Appendix 3.

THE MIHARBĀN TRADITION

Soḍhī Miharbān, putative author of the discourses recorded in the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, occupies an unenviable position in Sikh annals. His father Prithī Chand, although the eldest son of Gurū Rām Dās, had been passed over as successor to the office of Gurū in favour of his younger brother Arjan. The succession of Arjan did not, however, go unchallenged. Prithī Chand, claiming to be the only legitimate heir, evidently managed to retain the allegiance of a portion of the Sikh community and when he died in 1619 he was succeeded by his son Miharbān. The followers of Prithī Chand and his successors were stigmatized Mīṇās, or unscrupulous rogues, by the adherents of Gurū Arjan's line[2] and enmity between the two groups persisted until the Mīṇā strength eventually dwindled to insignificance during the latter part of the eighteenth century. Miharbān himself led the Mīṇā sect until his death in 1640, when he was succeeded by his son Harijī.[3]

Although there persisted in Sikh tradition a belief that Miharbān had written a janam-sākhī it was not until well into the twentieth century that a copy was actually known to exist. In the absence of any text, and on the basis of the prologue to the *Gyān-ratanāvalī*,[4] it was assumed that the work of one so notoriously inimical to the established line of Gurūs would certainly be dangerously heretical, and in this assurance the absence of a copy went unmourned. It was only in 1940 that a copy was discovered in the village of Damdamā Sāhib.[5]

Unfortunately the manuscript found in Damdamā Sāhib covers only the first three sections (*pothī*, 'volume') of the six which constituted the complete janam-sākhī. To this day the three remaining sections are still untraced, except for the portion of the *Miharbān* account of Nānak's death

---

[1] Published by the editor, Paṭiālā, and printed at the Phulkīān Press, Phulkīān Mārg, Paṭiālā. Pañjābī introduction, pp. *ix–lii*, and text, pp. 1–101. The abbreviation *AS* used in this study refers to this edition.

[2] *BG* XXVI: 33, XXXVI: 1 ff.

[3] *GNSR*, pp. 18–19. See also the *Dabistān* reference in *PPP* I.1 (April 1967), p. 61.

[4] See below, p. 37.

[5] *GNSR*, p. 19. Damdamā Sāhib, also known as Sābo kī Talvaṇḍī, is located eighteen miles south of Bhaṭiṇḍā. It acquired the name Damdamā, or 'resting-place', in memory of the occasion when in 1705 Gurū Gobind Siṅgh rested there following the Battle of Muktsar.

which appears in the later *Bālā* tradition.[1] The three sections included in the manuscript are entitled respectively *Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ*, *Pothī Harijī*, and *Pothī Chatarbhuj*. According to the colophon of the first of these the three remaining sections were entitled *Keśo Rāi Pothī*, *Abhai Pad Pothī*, and *Prem Pad Pothī*.[2]

An examination of the extant portion indicates three important conclusions. The first is that if the works of Gurū Nānak are to be accepted as the standard of orthodoxy the sect responsible for the *Miharbān* tradition cannot possibly be branded as heretical. Differences between the teachings Nānak and the theology of the *Miharbān* sect can certainly be detected, but they represent no more than the shifting of interpretation and emphasis one might expect after a period of one hundred years. The followers of Miharbān must be regarded as loyal perpetuators of the Divine Name theology propounded by Nānak rather than as heretics. Their sin plainly was schism, not heresy.

The second point to be noted is that if the collection of *Miharbān* discourses is to be classified as a janam-sākhī the definition of that term will require some extension. The so-called *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* is not simply a collection of hagiographic anecdotes. It does indeed incorporate many such anecdotes, and *Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ* uses a janam-sākhī variety of travel sequence as a framework for its discourses. The interest of the *Miharbān* commentators, however, is not primarily in this narrative material. Their chief interest is in exegesis of the works of Nānak and it is for precisely this reason that they must be called commentators rather than narrators. For the same reason the word used to designate its subdivisions is *goṣṭ* ('discourse'), not *sākhī*. Anecdotes rarely provide more than settings for the scriptural quotations and exposition which the *Miharbān* commentators were so concerned to propagate. In *Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ* this exegetical interest is dominant and in the two succeeding sections it is overwhelming.

The third point to emerge from an examination of the manuscript is that the extant *Miharbān* text is a late and highly evolved product. According to the *Miharbān* group's own claim the janam-sākhī represents discourses delivered orally by Miharbān and recorded shortly after his death in 1640.[3] There may well be truth in this claim, but if it is to be allowed it must follow that the extant text does not correspond to the original version. The colophon at the conclusion of the manuscript declares that the actual copying was concluded in S.1885 (A.D. 1828).[4] It is to this early nineteenth-century period rather than to the early seventeenth century that the extant text should be related, for it clearly represents a process of growth requiring much more than a hundred years. This is indicated by the number of discourses it contains,[5] by the enormous length and variety of its scriptural commentary, by interpolations which can only have come

---

[1] *MS Recension B* of the *Bālā* tradition. See above, pp. 19, 20.
[2] *Mih JS* 1.519.   [3] *GNSR*, p. 21.   [4] *Mih JS* 11.624.
[5] *Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ* contains 153 discourses, *Pothī Harijī* has 61, and *Pothī Chatarbhuj* has 74. The total recorded in all six *pothīs* is said to have been 575. *Mih JS* 1.519.

from late eighteenth-century sources, by evidences of earlier *Miharbān* recensions in other extant janam-sākhīs, and by comparisons of highly developed *Miharbān* narratives with the more primitive analogues recorded in these other janam-sākhīs. The basic structure of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* and an indeterminate quantity of its material may derive from the first half of the seventeenth century, but the text as it now stands is the composite product of several generations of later commentators. This expansion applies particularly to the scriptural quotations and exegesis which set the *Miharbān* tradition apart from all other janam-sākhīs.

The distinctive religious concerns expressed throughout the extant *Miharbān* material suggest that the tradition must have been sustained throughout the eighteenth century by groups (*sangat*) of Sikhs who did not subscribe to the evolving beliefs and discipline of the Khālsā brotherhood. These non-Khālsā *sangats* stand in a direct line leading from the teachings of Nānak through to the so-called *sahaj-dhārī* section of the modern Sikh community.[1] The followers of Miharbān may be regarded as seventeenth-century representatives of this Nānak-panthī stream and it would be entirely natural for the *Miharbān* writings, with their strongly religious emphasis, to survive within the eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century continuation of the same stream. The *Miharbān* following did not, of course, constitute the entire membership of this portion of the wider Sikh community, merely that of its most articulate section. It was also representative of this continuing Nānak-panthī tradition in that it perpetuated Khatrī influence, as opposed to the rapidly increasing Jaṭ dominance in the Khālsā.

Within the Khālsā the influence of the *Miharbān* tradition was negligible except in a purely negative sense and it was ironic that the principal *Miharbān* manuscript should have been discovered at Damdamā Sāhib, a village redolent with Khālsā associations. It is, however, possible that the *Miharbān* works may have commanded a continuing interest amongst sādhūs of the Udāsī sect and that versions of the *Miharbān* tradition may have been preserved in their *akhāṛās*.[2]

---

[1] The term *sahaj-dhārī* is normally translated 'slow-adopter', i.e. one who is moving towards a full acceptance of the Khālsā discipline but who has not yet proceeded further than an acceptance of Nānak's teachings concerning salvation. It is much more likely that the compound should be traced to Nānak's own distinctive usage of the word *sahaj*. In the works of Nānak *sahaj* is the most popular of several expressions used to designate the condition of ineffable bliss induced by the disciplined practice of *nām simaran*. *GNSR*, pp. 224–5. The term *sahaj-dhārī* probably assumed this usage and should accordingly be understood to mean 'one who accepts the *nām simaran* teachings of Nānak', without any reference to the adoption of the Khālsā discipline.

[2] The Udāsīs constitute an order of ascetics within the Sikh community. Although they claim as their founder Sirī Chand, one of Gurū Nānak's two sons, they are more accurately understood as a continuation within the new community of an earlier ascetic tradition. Nāth influence is plainly evident in some of their customs and beliefs. Their connection with the wider Sikh community is sustained by the reverence which they show towards the Ādi Granth and by close family ties. In theory, and generally in practice, the Udāsīs have been celibate and have relied largely upon the Jaṭ community for recruits. The word *akhāṛā*, 'arena', is used to designate their temples and monasteries. See H. A. Rose (ed.). *GTC*, vol. iii, pp. 479–81; and J. C. Oman, *The Mystics, Ascetics, and Saints of India* (London, 1903), pp. 194–6.

Manuscript copies

The manuscript discovered at Damdamā Sāhib in 1940 was acquired early in the following year by Khalsa College, Amritsar, and lodged in the College's Sikh History Research Department where it bears the number SHR 427.[1] This manuscript, as already noted, is dated S.1885 (A.D. 1828) and covers only the first three of the janam-sākhī's six sections. It is also incomplete in that two small clusters of folios are missing.[2] In 1961, however, the College obtained a second *Miharbān* manuscript (SHR 2190). This was no more than a large fragment covering seventy-two discourses of *Pothī Sach khaṇḍ*, but it did at least supply the two portions missing from the first manuscript. Its text corresponds closely to that of SHR 427. No date is given, but the copyist identifies himself as a Brāhman Sikh of Gujar Mal Maṇḍī in Lahore City.[3]

Apart from these two Khalsa College manuscripts no copies of any substantial portion of the *Miharbān* tradition are known to exist. There are, however, other works which were produced by the Mīṇās and of these one deserves a brief mention. This is the Mīṇā account of Miharbān's own life, a work attributed to his son Harijī and entitled *Goṣṭān Miharbān jī diān* ('Discourses of Miharbān'). The work deserves attention because of the light which it casts upon the nature of the *Miharbān* following and their distinctive beliefs. Two manuscript copies are extant, one dated S.1836 (A.D. 1779) held by the Sikh Reference Library in Amritsar, and the other an undated copy in the Central Public Library, Paṭiālā.[4] The text has not been published.

Printed edition

The text of *Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ* was published by the Sikh History Research Department of Khalsa College, Amritsar, in 1962 under the title *Janam Sākhī Srī Gurū Nānak Dev Jī* (edited by Kirpāl Singh and Shamsher Singh Ashok). This edition follows the text of SHR 427, supplemented where necessary by SHR 2190. The remainder of SHR 427 (*Pothī Harijī* and *Pothī Chatarbhuj*) was edited by Parkash Singh and published in 1969 as a second volume under the same title. Both volumes include a series of introductory essays by various contributors.[5]

[1] *Mih JS* I, Introduction, p. *v*, and personal communication from Dr. Gaṇḍā Singh of Paṭiālā. See also Kirpāl Singh (ed.), *A Catalogue of Punjabi and Urdu Manuscripts in the Sikh History Research Department* (Amritsar, 1963), pp. 13–15. *PHLS* i. 231.

[2] Loc. cit., ff. 82–84 and 121–125. The first cluster covered the concluding lines of *goṣṭ* 51, all of *goṣṭ* 52, and the opening portion of *goṣṭ* 53. The second cluster covered *goṣṭs* 68 and 69. *Mih JS* I, Introduction, p. *x*, and ibid., Introductory Essays, p. 153n.

[3] *Mih JS* I, Introduction, p. *x*. Kirpāl Singh (ed.), op. cit., pp. 12–13. *PHLS* i. 232.

[4] SRL MS no. 3510 and CPL MS no. 2527. *PHLS* ii. 255–6 and i. 375–6. The contents of the work are summarized in Piār Singh, 'A Critical Survey of Panjabi Prose in the Seventeenth Century' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University, 1968), pp. 150–4. For other Mīṇā works see ibid., pp. 138–50, 154–62. LDP MS no. 359 is a particularly valuable collection of Mīṇā material. Piār Singh, op. cit., pp. 142–9. *PHLS* i. 232–3. The Khalsa College MS no. SHR 2306 also deserves notice.

[5] In this study the abbreviation *Mih JS* I signifies the 1962 edition of the *Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ* text:

THE GYĀN-RATANĀVALĪ

Tradition attributes the authorship of the *Gyān-ratanāvalī* to Manī Siṅgh, a famous Sikh of the early eighteenth century, executed by Zakaryā Khān of Lahore in 1738.[1] A prologue attached to extant copies of the janam-sākhī relates the circumstances of its composition as follows:

The Sikhs once made a request to Bhāī Manī Singh, saying, 'The *Chhoṭe Mel Vāle*[2] have in several places introduced errors into the record of the first Master's discourses and life, and as a result of hearing these the Sikhs' faith in the Gurū is declining. Just as milk is adulterated with water and the swan separates the two, so you be our Great Swan and separate the Gurū's words from those of the Mīṇās.' Bhāī Manī Siṅgh replied, 'At the time when the fifth Master established the canon of *Sri Granth Sāhib* the Sikhs besought him, saying, "There is no authenticated version of the discourses. The *Pañj Mel Vāle*[3] have all interpolated objectionable things in the janam-sākhī and are leading the Sikhs astray." Bhāī Gurdās was instructed to write a janam-sākhī in the form of a *vār* so that by means of the *vār* the Gurū's Sikhs might hear and read the record [of the Gurū's life]. Bhāī Gurdās's *vār*, that treasury of wisdom,[4] is a janam-sākhī.' The Sikhs then said, 'He has written [simply] the record. Please give us an expanded commentary on it so that faith may grow in the Sikhs who hear it.' Bhāī Manī Singh replied, 'Just as an ant cannot lift an elephant's burden and a turtle cannot raise Mount Mandar, so I am unable to prepare a commentary on the discourses of Bābā [Nānak]. But just as swimmers fix reeds in the river so that those who do not know the way may also cross, so I shall take Bhāī Gurdās's *vār* as my basis and in accordance with it, and with the accounts which I have heard at the court of the tenth Master, I shall relate to you whatever commentary issues from my humble mind.'[5]

This passage is certainly important in so far as it testifies to the early eighteenth-century influence of the Mīṇās (the *Chhote Mel Vāle*) and to Khālsā hostility towards them. It may even be essentially accurate as an explanation for an original eighteenth-century *Gyān-ratanāvalī*.[6] The professed connection with Manī Singh is, however, open to serious doubt and so too is the alleged period of composition. No eighteenth-century text

---

and *Mih JS* II signifies the 1969 edition of the two remaining *pothīs*. Extensively abridged texts of all three *pothīs* appear in Kirpāl Singh, *Janam Sākhī Paramparā* (Paṭiālā, 1969), Appendix, pp. 58–220.

[1] *MK*, p. 712. Macauliffe, i. lxxiv–vi.

[2] Lit. 'the lower congregation', a term which could be applied to any heretics or dissenters but which came to be attached specifically to the Mīṇās. *MK*, p. 603. See above, p. 33.

[3] The five execrated groups whom Khālsā Sikhs, in accordance with their baptismal oath, must spurn. These include the Mīṇās. *MK*, pp. 593–4. The usage in this context is anachronistic as the term dates from the seventeenth or early eighteenth century.

[4] *gyān* (*jñān*): knowledge, wisdom. *ratanāvalī*: a string of pearls or necklace of gems.

[5] *GR*, pp. 3–4. For Bhāī Gurdās see below, pp. 43–5.

[6] Although the prologue refers to Bhāī Gurdās's *vār* as the *Gyān-ratanāvalī* the title is more commonly applied to the janam-sākhī attributed to Manī Siṅgh. The *vār* in question is Bhāī Gurdās's first. The *Bhagat-ratanāvalī*, or *Sikhān dī Bhagat-māl*, a work based on Bhāī Gurdās's eleventh *vār*, is also attributed to Manī Siṅgh.

appears to have survived. All we have are lengthy nineteenth-century products which incorporate substantial quantities of extraneous material, much of it plainly derived from *Bālā* sources. In addition to numerous anecdotes this supplementary material also includes commentaries on *Āsā dī Vār*, Gurū Nānak's *Japjī*, and his *Siddh Goṣṭ*.

The evidence provided by extant texts suggests the following pattern. At some indeterminate date an amplified version of Bhāī Gurdās's first *vār* was produced. This, in its original form, probably comprised no more than the actual stanzas of the *vār*, with a comparatively brief paraphrase in each instance. Most stanzas were quoted individually, each with its corresponding paraphrase. Whenever a particular anecdote extended over more than one stanza, however, the relevant stanzas would be cited together and followed by a single paraphrase. The result would have been a brief janam-sākhī incorporating Bhāī Gurdās's limited selection of anecdotes together with his preliminary description of the darkness preceding the light of Nānak and also his summary treatment of Gurū Nānak's immediate successors.

This nucleus must have been a brief work, its contents apparently limited to quotation of the successive stanzas of *Vār* I and simple paraphrases of these stanzas. To it have been added materials drawn from all available sources. The original stanzas and paraphrases are still easily identifiable in most instances, but inserted between them one now finds a vast fund of supplementary anecdotes and commentary. This interpolated material is so substantial that the late nineteenth-century version of the *Gyān-ratanāvalī* rivals its *Bālā* contemporary in length.

The additions which have so impressively enlarged the *Gyān-ratanāvalī* cannot have been the work of a single interpolator. This is made clear by a division within the nineteenth-century collection. While covering the Gurū's early life and a period of travels which takes him to eastern and southern India the modern *Gyān-ratanāvalī* is relatively coherent. Parts of it are, moreover, distinctively different from the analogues provided by the other major janam-sākhī traditions. Instances occur of borrowings from the *Bālā* tradition, but most nineteenth-century texts omit the person of Bhāī Bālā from this first section. It is the introduction of Bhāī Bālā which marks the line of division between the two sections.[1] Some clusters of anecdotes continue to ignore him and these retain the essential consistency of the first section. On the whole, however, this latter portion of the modern *Gyān-ratanāvalī* resembles the disordered *Bālā* pattern and lengthy passages represent direct borrowings from the *Bālā* tradition.

One other element remains to be noted. At some stage in this growth process an explanatory prologue (quoted above) and epilogue were added. Like the supplementary anecdotes these two passages refer to Maṇī Singh in the third person and thus cannot be attributed to him personally. It seems likely that they were appended at a comparatively early date, before the introduction of significant interpolation, and that they provide a correspondingly early stage in the evolution of the bulky product which

[1] *GR*, p. 264. For further details see *GNSR*, pp. 26–7.

we now possess.[1] The final stage was reached when the heterogeneous result was lithographed at the end of the nineteenth century.

Manuscript copies

The only important collection of *Gyān-ratanāvalī* manuscripts consists of three copies in the possession of Professor Prītam Singh of Amritsar, all of them complete and all dated. One bears the date S.1778 (A.D. 1721) which, if correct, would firmly place the *Gyān-ratanāvalī* in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. It is, however, evident both from the modernity of the manuscript's language and from its actual contents that the date must be incorrect.[2] The two remaining manuscripts are dated S.1883 (A.D. 1826) and S.1927 (A.D. 1870). In addition to these three copies Shamsher Singh Ashok lists four undated manuscripts, two of them substantially complete and two incomplete.[3] Two more are held by the Sikh History Research Department of Khalsa College, Amritsar, both of them complete and both dated.[4]

Printed editions

At least three editions of the amplified *Gyān-ratanāvalī* text have been lithographed. One was published in 1891 by Charāg Dīn and Sarāj Dīn of Lahore; a second was published by the Sanskrit Book Depot of Lahore in 1892;[5] and a third was issued by Gulāb Singh and Sons, also of Lahore, in 1908.[6]

THE MAHIMĀ PRAKĀŚ *TRADITION*

Internal evidence suggests that most of the important janam-sākhī traditions evolved in areas to the north and north-west of Lahore. The *Bālā* tradition may perhaps be an exception to this rule, but this has not yet been established. The only proven exception is the *Mahimā Prakāś*. This version of the life of Nānak represents a tradition which developed in Khaḍūr, a village south-east of Amritsar on the right bank of the Beās river. It was here that Gurū Aṅgad lived during his years as leader of the Sikh community (1539–52). Two centuries later the same village produced

---

[1] Jagjīt Singh argues that the original work was written in A.D. 1739 by Sūrat Singh of Bāṭh, a follower of Manī Singh. 'A Critical and Comparative Study of the Janam Sakhis of Guru Nanak' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University, 1967), pp. 445–9.

[2] For examples see *PHLS* ii. 243.

[3] *PHLS* ii. 240–5.

[4] MSS nos. SHR 2300C, dated S. 1891 (A.D. 1834); and SHR 1440, dated S. 1895 (A.D. 1838). Kirpāl Singh (ed.), *A Catalogue of Punjabi and Urdu Manuscripts &c* (Amritsar, 1963), pp. 5–6.

[5] An abridged text of this 1892 edition is reproduced in Kirpāl Singh, *Janam Sākhī Paramparā* (Paṭiālā, 1969), Appendix, pp. 330–401. This edition was lithographed in Bombay.

[6] The abbreviation *GR* used in this study refers to the first of these. The book is now very difficult to procure. The British Library and the India Office Library each possess a copy.

its own distinctive janam-sākhī tradition, the *Mahimā Prakāś* or 'Light of Glory'.

Although two janam-sākhīs bearing the title *Mahimā Prakāś* now exist only one of these strictly qualifies as a separate and distinct janam-sākhī tradition. This is the collection of sākhīs known as the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak*, or '*Mahimā Prakāś* in Prose'. Unlike its predecessors this tradition does not deal exclusively with Nānak anecdotes, traversing instead the lives of all ten Gurūs and treating each of them relatively briefly. The first Gurū naturally receives special attention and the portion covering his life can be detached to form a complete janam-sākhī. It is, however, an unusually brief one, omitting many of the well-established anecdotes one might otherwise expect in an eighteenth-century collection. In the actual selection of anecdotes a primary criterion has obviously been the reputation of Khaḍūr. No reference to the village from earlier tradition appears to have been overlooked and some extra anecdotes relating to it have been added.

The second of the janam-sākhīs bearing the *Mahimā Prakāś* title is the so-called *Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā*, or '*Mahimā Prakāś* in Verse'. Apart from the actual title and the fact that both were evidently compiled in Khaḍūr there is little to suggest any close connection between the two janam-sākhīs. The third of the *Kavitā* sākhīs corresponds to one which first appears in the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak*,[1] but thereafter the *Kavitā* version follows a pattern which indicates a variety of sources. Sākhīs found only in the *Vāratak* collection are ignored and at two critical points (the dates of Nānak's birth and death) the two versions directly contradict each other.[2]

The *Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā* in its extant form evidently represents the product of two distinct phases. The first was the composition of a metrical janam-sākhī, based upon earlier narrative janam-sākhīs and probably the oral tradition of Khaḍūr. This first stage, representing the authentic *Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā*, has subsequently been augmented by later borrowings from other janam-sākhīs and from apocryphal works attributed to Gurū Nānak. In some instances these prose borrowings have been interspersed within particular sākhīs between sections of the original verse. Elsewhere they have been incorporated as complete prose sākhīs. Particularly obvious are extensive borrowings from a *Miharbān* source, complete with the exegetical supplements so characteristic of the *Miharbān* tradition.

The metrical portion of the *Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā* presents no apparent problems of authorship or dating. The author gives his name as Sarūp Dās and specifies S.1833 (A.D. 1776) as the year in which he composed his poetic account in Khaḍūr. In the case of the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak*, however, the extant text provides no information. The author is variously known in modern works as Kirpāl Siṅgh Bhallā and Kirpāl Dās Bhallā; and the date of composition as either S.1798 (A.D. 1741) or S.1830

---

[1] *GNM*, pp. 7–8. *SLTGN(Pbī)*, p. 32.
[2] *GNM*, pp. 5, 347. *SLTGN(Pbī)*, pp. 32, 46.

(A.D. 1773). Either date is possible. An earlier date is unlikely and any date more than two years later would appear to be impossible.[1]

Manuscript copies

Manuscript copies of both *Mahimā Prakāś* versions are surprisingly scarce. Only four *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak* manuscripts are said to exist, and it is possible that the actual number is even smaller. One manuscript is (or was) in the library of the Languages Department of the Pañjāb in Paṭiālā.[2] A second is in the personal library of the late Bhāī Vīr Singh, now housed in Dehrā Dūn; and a third is held by the Sikh History Research Department of Khalsa College, Amritsar.[3] The fourth is reported to have been in the Punjab Public Library, Lahore. The third of these manuscripts is a copy of the second, made in 1932. The second is itself a recent product, having been copied only four years earlier.[4]

Manuscript copies of the *Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā* are more numerous. Eight such copies are known to be extant.[5] Those which are dated range in age from S.1857 (A.D. 1800) to S.1897 (A.D. 1840).

Printed editions

A text of the portion of the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak* which deals with Gurū Nānak has been printed in *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak*, together with an annotated English translation.[6] This text follows the Khalsa College manuscript SHR 2308 noted above. An earlier edition of the same text which was privately printed in Dehrā Dūn in 1959 is now out of print.[7] A list of the Nanak anecdotes included in the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak* is given in Appendix 5.

A complete text of the *Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā* was published in two volumes by the Languages Department of the Pañjāb in 1970–1.[8] The first of the volumes, issued under the title *Gurū Nānak Mahimā*, covers

---

[1] For a more detailed discussion of the authorship and dating of the two versions, together with citations, see W. H. McLeod, introduction to an English translation of the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak*, in *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 55–7.

[2] Efforts made to trace it in 1969 were unsuccessful.

[3] MS no. SHR 2308. Kirpāl Singh (ed.), *A Catalogue of Punjabi and Urdu Manuscripts &c* (Amritsar, 1963), pp. 17–18.

[4] MS no. SHR 2308, f. 129a. The copyist, Akālī Kaur Singh, evidently left no information concerning the location of the manuscript which he used.

[5] LDP MS no. 176; SRL MS no. 1151; Khalsa College MS no. SHR 2300A; Pañjābī Sāhit Akādemī, Ludhiānā, MS no. 792 (incomplete); Pañjāb Archives MS no. 792/M; a manuscript in the possession of Giānī Prakaran Singh of Saṅgrūr; and two manuscripts in the Punjab Public Library, Lahore. *PHLS* i. 368 and ii. 249–51. Kirpāl Singh (ed.), op. cit., pp. 18–19. Gaṇḍā Singh, *A Bibliography of the Punjab* (Paṭiālā, 1966), p. 208. Gobind Singh Lāmbā, introduction to *GNM*, pp. 9–14. LDP MS no. 176 bears the date S. 1857.

[6] *SLTGN(Pbī)*, pp. 32–46. *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 59–87.

[7] Kirpāl Singh (ed.), *Jīvan Kathā Srī Gurū Nānak Dev Jī Mahimā Prakāś (Vāratak) vichon* (Dehrā Dūn, 1959).

[8] Sarūp Dās Bhallā (ed. Shamsher Singh Ashok and Gobind Singh Lāmbā), *Gurū Nānak Mahimā* (Paṭiālā, 1970), and *Mahimā Prakāś* (Paṭiālā, 1971). The abbreviation *GNM* refers to the first of these.

the portion which concerns the life of Nānak. The second volume, mis-leadingly entitled simply *Mahimā Prakāś*, contains a brief introduction by one of the editors and the portion dealing with the nine remaining Gurūs. The manuscript held by the Languages Department has been followed in the preparation of this text, with supplements and amendments drawn from three other manuscripts.[1]

INDIVIDUAL ĴANAM-SĀKHĪS

Two important janam-sākhīs which have not produced distinctive tradi-tions are the manuscripts which for convenience will be referred to as *LDP 194* and *B40*. (In both cases the titles are library catalogue numbers.) Both are closely related to other traditions, notably to the *Purātan* and *Ādi Sākhīs* collections, but not to the point of justifying inclusion within either of them.

LDP 194   The abbreviation *LDP 194* designates manuscript no. 194 in the library of the Languages Department of the Pañjāb, Paṭiālā. At first sight it may appear that the manuscript is an early recension of the *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād* janam-sākhīs, and that it should accordingly be in the *Purātan* group. This would be misleading. Although the manuscript certainly stands within a line of descent leading to the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*, it is the line which accounts only for the extra material added by the *Hāfizābād* compiler to the *Colebrooke* nucleus. Later it will be shown how an early tradition (designated *Narrative I*) divided into two streams (*Narrative Ia* and *Narrative Ib*). The first of these leads directly to the *Colebrooke* version and accounts both for the distinctive structure of the *Purātan* narrative and also for almost all of its material. To this *Colebrooke* version the *Hāfizābād* compiler added two anecdotes and a discourse drawn from a *Narrative Ib* source.[2]

   It is to this second stream that *LDP 194* belongs, and as this was no more than a supplementary source for the *Purātan* tradition it would be misleading to bracket the manuscript with the *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād* janam-sākhīs in a common tradition. The link connecting it with the *Purātan* tradition is plain, but so too is its distinction from the main line of *Purātan* development. This same *Narrative Ib* tradition also contributes directly to the *Ādi Sākhīs* and *B40* compilations, and less directly to the *Miharbān* collection.[3]

   The *LDP 194* manuscript is in poor condition. Several leaves are missing, some of the folios have been bound out of order, and having reached the figure 100 the pagination reverts to 43 in the middle of a sākhī. It is, however, easily read. The script, although very immature, is unusually clear. The manuscript bears no date.

   The actual text of the manuscript consists of two principal elements. The first portion is narrative, and although it is not regularly divided into

---

[1] *LDP* MS no. 176, supplemented by the SRL, Panjab Archives, and Khalsa College MSS.
[2] See above, p. 25.   [3] See below, p. 195.

sākhīs a total of twenty can be distinguished. These are listed in Appendix 4. The second portion comprises extended quotations from the works of Nānak, notably the *Siddh Goṣṭ* and *Vār Āsā*. The *Siddh Goṣṭ* begins on folio 56a of the second set of folio numbers. The text briefly reverts to narrative with the Achal discourse on folio 77b and then continues its scriptural quotation through to folio 117b. A few folios of scriptural quotation in a different hand conclude the manuscript.

The B40 Janam-sākhī The B40 manuscript (so called because of the number which it bears in the India Office Library catalogue) is perhaps the most important of all extant janam-sākhīs. This reputation it deserves partly because of the quality of its illustrations; partly because of the unusually specific information which is provided concerning its origins; but chiefly because it is of all janam-sākhīs the most representative in terms of content. It is, like all janam-sākhīs, a composite product. The range of sources and styles, however, is superior to that of any other collection. Oral and written sources have both been used by its compiler and from these sources he has drawn examples of all the major forms to be found in the janam-sākhī literature.

Two notes appended to the text describe the genesis of the *B40 Janam-sākhī*.[1] It was commissioned, the scribe informs us, by a certain Bhāī Sangū Mal, 'servant of the congregation'. The copyist identifies himself as Dayā Rām Abrol and his artist colleague as Ālam Chand Rāj. The work was completed in S.1790 on a date corresponding to 31 August 1733. In 1907 the manuscript was acquired from Lahore for the India Office Library.

An edition of the Gurmukhī text of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* was published in 1974 by Professor Piār Singh under the title *Janam Sākhī Srī Gurū Nānak Dev Jī*. To this has since been added an English translation by W. H. McLeod entitled *The B40 Janam-sākhī*. Its contents are listed below on pp. 230–2.

MISCELLANEOUS WORKS CLOSELY RELATED TO THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS

In view of their enormous and sustained popularity it is scarcely surprising that the janam-sākhīs should have stimulated an affiliated literature, most of it appearing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Four representatives of this literature will be briefly noted. Reference must also be made to a related work composed during the early seventeenth century. This latter is the first of a collection of thirty-nine *vārs* by the distinguished Sikh poet Bhāī Gurdās, a collection which possesses a considerable importance for any understanding of the early Sikh community.

Vār 1 of Bhāī Gurdās Bhāī Gurdās Bhallā has three major claims to fame in the history of the Sikh community. The first of these is that he

[1] *B40*, ff. 84b, 230a–231a.

was a nephew of the third Gurū, Amar Dās. Secondly, he was the amanu-
ensis employed by Gurū Arjan to record the contents of the Ādi Granth
during its compilation in 1603–4. Thirdly he was himself the author of
thirty-nine poetic works written in the *vār* form, and of 556 others
composed in the *kabitt* form. Although none of these works was included
in the Ādi Granth the *vārs* came to be regarded as 'the key to the Gurū
Granth Sāhib' and the compositions of Bhāī Gurdās are specifically
approved for recitation in Sikh gurdwaras. His date of birth is unknown,
but his death is said to have occurred in 1637.[1]

Although Bhāī Gurdās's first *vār* is not strictly speaking a janam-sākhī
no survey of the janam-sākhīs would be complete without reference to it.
The *vār* differs from the standard janam-sākhī form in two respects. First,
it uses a poetic form instead of the narrative of the janam-sākhīs; and
secondly its primary intention is to eulogize the unique status and power
of the Gurū. These are, however, only marginal differences. In order to
fulfil his intention, Bhāī Gurdās has used anecdotes of precisely the same
kind as those of the janam-sākhīs, all of them to be found at various points
in different janam-sākhīs. A loose definition of the janam-sākhī would
certainly embrace the relevant portion of Bhāī Gurdās's first *vār* (stanzas
23–45). To this portion should be added stanzas 13–14 of the eleventh *vār*,
a passage in which Bhāī Gurdās lists the more prominent of Bābā Nānak's
followers. The standard printed edition is that of Hazārā Singh.[2] An
English translation is given in *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru
Nanak.*[3]

Because of its relatively early date Bhāī Gurdās's contribution is of
notable importance, and its value is enhanced by the personal links which
connected the author to the line of Gurūs descended from Amar Dās. Its
importance must not, however, be exaggerated. Bhāī Gurdās's *Vār* I has
commonly been read as a historical account of the Gurū's life and a strong
insistence has been laid upon an obligation to accept all that he writes as
literally true. This scarcely does justice to Bhāī Gurdās's method and
understanding. His purpose was to magnify the Gurū's greatness, a task
which he performs with notable success. In early seventeenth-century
Pañjāb there was no reason why his panegyric should have been written
with scrupulous concern for the canons of later historical scholarship. It
was the myth that mattered and, as already indicated in the discussion of
the purpose of the janam-sākhīs,[4] legend and history were alike legitimate
ingredients.

The point deserves to be stressed in this context because the defence of
the historical reliability of the janam-sākhīs generally takes its stand upon
an assumed inerrancy of the works of Bhāī Gurdās. To deny this inerrancy
as far as strictly historical information is concerned is not to suggest that

¹ For citations and further details concerning Bhāī Gurdās see *GNSR*, pp. 14–15. See also
Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. i (London, 1963), pp. 310–12.

² *Vārān Bhāī Gurdās*, ed. Hazārā Singh and revised by Vīr Singh. Amritsar: Khālsā Samāchār,
several editions. Also *SLTGN(Pbī)*, pp. 13–19.

³ *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 32–44.   ⁴ See above, pp. 8–10.

Bhāī Gurdās was dishonest or even credulous. Bhāī Gurdās relates various miraculous occurrences,[1] sets a discourse with the long-deceased Gorakh-nāth on the legendary mountain of Sumeru,[2] and attaches to Bābā Nānak an anecdote which had already been extensively used in earlier Sūfī hagiography.[3] None of these elements destroys the value of what Bhāī Gurdās has written, provided only that the nature of that value is under-stood. His approach and his understanding were not those of a twentieth-century historian, nor were they inferior. It is merely that he pursued a different understanding of the nature of truth, the truth which myth seeks to express and for which it may utilize legend as well as history. For those who believe in the divine inspiration of Gurū Nānak Bhāī Gurdās's words are eternally true, regardless of what use he may make of legendary material. To read him as a chronicler of literal historical facts is to misunderstand him.

None of the *vārs* of Bhāī Gurdās are dated and the only statement which may be made with any assurance is that they must have been written before 1637. The fact that he obviously had before him a janam-sākhī model[4] suggests a date close to 1637 rather than earlier in the seventeenth century, but falls far short of proof. A list of the anecdotes utilized in the composition of his Nānak stanzas is given in Appendix 5.

The *Nānak Prakāś* of Santokh Singh   Santokh Singh's *Nānak Prakāś* was completed in 1823 and since that date has exercised a considerable influence upon the popular understanding of the life of Gurū Nānak.[5] It is of interest for two reasons. First, it did much to strengthen a *Bālā* dominance which by the beginning of the nineteenth century was already well established. Confronted by the Hindālī content of the extant *Bālā* manuscripts Santokh Singh decided that these manuscripts must represent a corrupted version of an original janam-sākhī delivered before Gurū Aṅgad. The original version had, he believed, been corrupted simply by means of interpolation and he accordingly concluded that an authentic text could be restored by excising the recognizably Hindālī portions of the janam-sākhī. This he did and the first section of his *Nānak Prakāś* (the *pūrabāradh* section) was based upon the remainder.

The *Nānak Prakāś* is also of interest for the extensive additions which it makes to the *Bālā* tradition as Santokh Singh had received it. Three supplementary sources are of particular importance. First, there is the *Purātan* tradition. This appears in such distinctively *Colebrooke* anecdotes as 'Dūnī Chand and the Wolf' and 'The Kashmīrī Paṇḍit'.[6] Secondly, there was the *B40 Janam-sākhī* or a source very close to it. The *B40 Janam-sākhī* is itself an amalgam drawn from several sources, one of them an oral tradition (designated *Narrative III*) which is peculiar to *B40*.[7]

---

[1] BG I:31, 32, 36, 41.   [2] BG I:28.
[3] BG I:44. See below, pp. 118–20.   [4] See below, p. 204.
[5] The correct title of the work is *Gur Nānak Prakāś*. The shortened form is, however, almost invariably used. For a brief account of Santokh Singh's life see Macauliffe, i. lxxvi–vii.
[6] *NPr* II.4, 14. See also II.15, 20, 21, 25.   [7] See below, pp. 220–6, 229–32.

Most of the *Narrative III* anecdotes recorded in the *B40 Janam-sākhi* reappear in the *Nānak Prakāś*.[1] Thirdly, there are numerous details together with a few complete anecdotes which have no antecedents in extant janam-sākhīs. Much of this material was presumably derived by Santokh Singh from current oral tradition. These three supplementary sources together contribute the bulk of the anecdotes recorded in the second of the two sections in the *Nānak Prakāś* (the *uttarāradh* section).

Like the *vārs* of Bhāī Gurdās the *Nānak Prakāś* is in verse, but in both form and intention it comes much closer to the standard narrative janam-sākhī. Although the form is clearly intended to be poetic the product offers constant reminders of its prose origins. A charitable judgement might describe it as narrative poetry, with the qualification that its merits are essentially narrative rather than poetic. Today even its narrative qualities are difficult to appreciate, for Santokh Singh's crabbed mixture of Pañjābī and Sanskritized Hindī is far removed from the simple language of the janam-sākhīs.

Even more important in terms of its subsequent influence was the lengthy sequel to the *Nanāk Prakāś*, a work entitled *Gur Pratāp Sūray* and popularly referred to as the *Sūraj Prakāś*. This substantial composition, completed in 1844, covers the lives of Nānak's nine successors. Whereas the *Nānak Prakāś* stands as one of several janam-sākhīs the *Sūraj Prakāś* commonly stands alone, and references by modern authors to incidents in the lives of the Gurūs can often be traced no further than statements by Santokh Singh. This is particularly true of the eight Gurūs between Nānak and Gobind Siṅgh. An edited text of both the *Nānak Prakāś* and *Sūraj Prakāś* was published in fourteen volumes by Vīr Singh between 1927 and 1935, and is still in print.[2]

The *Nānak Prakāś* is divided into two parts, the *pūrabāradh* and the *uttarāradh*. In footnote citations these will be designated by the roman figures I and II respectively. Sections of each part (*adhyāya*) will be indicated by arabic numerals without parentheses, and for individual stanzas within an *adhyāya* arabic numerals within parentheses will be used. The actual title of the work will be represented by the abbreviation *NPr*.

The *Nānak Vijay* of Sant Ren   Sant Ren's *Nānak Vijay*, or *Sri Gurū Nānak Dig Vijay* is another nineteenth-century contribution to the hagiographic literature concerning Guru Nānak. Its importance has been slight and it warrants mention here only because the author has sometimes been represented as a contemporary of Nānak. This misunderstanding has evidently arisen because the leader of a group of sādhūs figuring in the *Bālā* anecdote entitled 'The Good Bargain' is also named Sant Ren. The

---

[1] *NPr* II.12, 13, 14, 40, 44. Also II.11, 38.

[2] Amritsar: the Khālsā Samāchār. No single title is applied to the complete edition. The thirteen volumes comprise the following: vol. i, *Sri Gur Pratāp Sūraj Granthāvalī* (Vīr Singh's Introduction); vols. ii–iv, *Sri Gur Nānak Prakāś*; vols. v–xiii, *Sri Gur Pratāp Sūraj Granth* (the *Sūraj Prakāś*).

account of Bābā Nānak which it offers is, as one would expect, another amplified version of the *Bālā* tradition.[1]

The *Sūchak Prasaṅg Gurū kā* attributed to Bhāī Bahlo   Bahlo is said to have been an early Sikh who died in the month of Chet, S. 1660 (A.D. 1603).[2] If the composition entitled *Sūchak Prasaṅg Gurū kā* were in fact the work of such a person it would rank as the earliest of all extant accounts of the life of Nānak. It is, however, another *Bālā*-based nineteenth-century product. This is evident both from the modernity of its language and from its contents.

The *Sūchak Prasaṅg Gurū kā* differs from its nineteenth-century contemporaries in that it offers an epitome of the *Bālā* tradition instead of an expanded version, compressing a remarkable amount into a very brief space. Although the section dealing with Gurū Nānak consists of only thirty-eight couplets the author manages to mention more than fifty janam-sākhī anecdotes. Occasionally an anecdote receives more than one couplet, but normally each is limited to a single line or half a line. The terseness of the style is well illustrated by couplet 24:

> *alī yār nūn balī banāyā bimal jot nūn sudhu karāyā*
> *māṇak chand kābal bich tārā bāl gudāī ṭille bārā*[3]

Alī Yār he made a saint; Bimal Jot he cleansed.
Māṇak Chand he redeemed in Kābul; and Bālgundāī in Ṭillā.

This may be compared with a *Bālā* version similar to the source which the author has obviously used. In the India Office Library manuscript Panj. B41 the portion so summarily expressed in this couplet covers eleven folios.[4]

The only extant copy of the work is a manuscript in the possession of Dr. Gaṇḍā Singh of Paṭiālā. This bears the date S. 1907 (A.D. 1850).[5] The text of the portion which concerns Gurū Nānak has been published in *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak*.[6]

Vīr Singh's *Srī Gurū Nānak Chamatkār*.   Bhāī Vīr Singh's two-volume work *Srī Gurū Nānak Chamatkār* is of interest as a singularly attractive twentieth-century representative of the continuing janam-sākhī form.[7]

---

[1] Jagjīt Singh, 'A Critical and Comparative Study of the Janam Sakhis of Guru Nanak', pp. 190–3. Jagjīt Singh, following Shamsher Singh Ashok, lists four extant manuscripts. A microfilm copy of one of these is held by the Languages Department in Paṭiālā.

[2] *PHLS* i. 361.   [3] *SLTGN(Pbī)*, p. 27.   [4] *B41*, ff. 187a–198a.

[5] *PHLS* i. 361. The text is inscribed upon account books (*vahī*) of the kind used by shopkeepers.

[6] *SLTGN(Pbī)*, pp. 26–8.

[7] Vīr Singh, *Srī Gurū Nānak Chamatkār*. Amritsar: Khālsā Samāchār. First edition: vol. i, 1928, and vol. ii,1933. The work is still in print. Vīr Singh used the same form to re-create versions of the traditions concerning the lives of Gurū Aṅgad, Gurū Amar Dās, Gurū Rām Dās, and Gurū Arjan (*Srī Aṣṭ Gur Chamatkār*, Amritsar, 2 vols., 1952 and 1968), and Gurū Gobind Siṅgh (*Srī Kalgīdhar Chamatkār*, Amritsar, 2 vols., 1925). For another twentieth-century janam-sākhī see Kirpāl Singh, *Janam Sākhī Paramparā* (Paṭiālā, 1969), pp. 1–166.

Just as Santokh Singh and others rewrote the received *Bālā* tradition so in like manner Vīr Singh produced in contemporary language an augmented version of the *Purātan* tradition. Vīr Singh was an unusually gifted Pañjābī writer and his *Srī Gurū Nānak Chamatkār* can be regarded, in terms of language and style, as the climax of janam-sākhī development.

4

THE LANGUAGE OF THE
JANAM-SĀKHĪS

Grierson, when dealing with the language of the janam-sākhīs, is both brief and confusing. In the primary definition given in *The Linguistic Survey of India* he declares: 'The celebrated *Janam-Sakhi* (a life of Nanak) is in Lahnda, not in Panjabi.'[1] Elsewhere he contradicts this statement. In an earlier volume, having claimed that 'Lahnda ... contains no prose literature', he adds the footnote: 'The Janam Sakhi, a well known Sikh book, is written in a dialect which is half Panjabi and half Lahnda.'[2]

The contradiction is of less importance than might appear. It would be of importance only if Grierson's rigorous distinction between Pañjābī and Lahndā as two separate languages could be sustained. The line which, with due caution, he drew at 74° E. to distinguish the 'Indo-Aryan' Pañjābī from the 'Dardic' Lahndā[3] is meaningful only as a convenient division between two groups of Pañjābī dialects. Although the language group which he labelled Lahndā provides a viable linguistic unit, it must be regarded as a segment of the larger Pañjābī group, not as a separate language. The line which he drew amounts to no more than a convenience. There is, as Grierson well understood, a substantial area within which the Lahndā dialects merge into Mājhī and others of the eastern group.[4]

Once the essential vagueness of this distinction is recognized it becomes possible to accept an adapted form of Grierson's second definition. Most of the janam-sākhīs are written in varying blends of Pañjābī dialects, to which some exotic elements have also been added. In most instances Lahndā is dominant. Two notable exceptions are the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak*, in which Mājhī strongly predominates, and the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* which generally uses Sādhukkaṛī. Partial exceptions also occur in the case of the *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs* collections. A variety of sources have been used in the preparation of both, and because at least one of these sources happened to be in Sādhukkaṛī a small number of sākhīs in that language appear in both janam-sākhīs. This feature is more prominent in the *Ādi Sākhīs* than in the *B40 Janam-sākhī*.

The Lahndā group of Pañjābī dialects has been variously subdivided. Grierson's classification was based upon a primary distinction between a large southern segment and a smaller northern group, the line being drawn

---

[1] G. A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. ix, part i (Calcutta, 1916), p. 618. Grierson's use of the singular indicates the *Bālā* tradition.

[2] Ibid., vol. viii, part i (Calcutta, 1919), p. 247.

[3] Ibid., vol. i, part i (Calcutta, 1927), p. 136.   [4] Ibid. ix.i.608.

a little to the south of Jhelum. The northern group was further divided into north-eastern and north-western groups, and all three sections were then subdivided according to Grierson's understanding of their dialects. Most of the area covered by the districts of Gujrāt, Gujranwālā, and Lahore he classified as 'Panjābī merging into Lahndā'.[1]

Provided that the extreme vagueness of such definitions is given due stress this classification can be generally accepted. It is, however, convenient to ignore Grierson's subdivision of Northern Lahndā and to lay greater stress upon his principal subdivision of Southern Lahndā. In the case of the latter he drew an east–west line a little to the north of 30°N. This line deserves rather more prominence, and if with the usual insistence upon a necessary vagueness of definition it is given this prominence a threefold division emerges. In the north there is Northern Lahndā, with the Poṭhohārī dialect occupying a position of particular prominence; and in the south the dialects of Multān, Muzzafargaṛh, Bahāwalpur, and Derā Ghāzī Khān. This leaves Central Lahndā covering the area of Miānwālī, Shāhpur, Lyallpur, Montgomery, Jhaṅg and Maṅkerā.

The eastern portion of this central area must be closely linked with the immediately adjacent areas of Gujrāt, Gujranwālā, and Lahore. This link enables us to circumscribe the geographical area and the distinctive dialect which dominates the janam-sākhī literature. To this linguistic area belong the *Purātan*, *LDP 194*, and *Bālā* janam-sākhīs, and the greater part of the *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs* collections.[2] *LDP 194* and the *Bālā* janam-sakhis are generally more homogeneous in terms of language forms, and in the case of the latter the language is more modern. The other three collections, all of them using a variety of sources, display a greater diversity of dialect forms. Of the exotic elements the more prominent are Persian and Braj.

The principal exception to this general rule is the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* which for most of its material uses the language variously called Sādhukkaṛī or Sant Bhāṣā, 'the language of the Sants'. This language consists of a Khaṛī Bolī base, supplemented by elements drawn from Braj and other North Indian vernaculars. It served as a *lingua franca* for devotional works of the Sant tradition, a religious movement which spread over much of Northern India during the late medieval and early modern period.[3] Representatives of this tradition commonly took the Khaṛī Bolī of the Delhi area as their foundation and added to it vocabulary and supplementary grammatical forms derived from their own geographical areas. In the case of its Ādi Granth and janam-sākhī examples the supplement is, predictably, provided by Pañjābī dialects. This supplement is frequently insignificant to the point that the resultant language might well be described simply as Khaṛī Bolī.

Passages written in Sādhukkaṛī occur in both the *Ādi Sākhīs* and the

---

[1] Ibid. viii.i.233 ff., and ix.i.607 ff.

[2] All five display the terminal forms which constitute the most distinctive feature of Lahndā. The most prominent are the verb-endings *usu* (Perfective) and *sī* (Future). Gurcharan Singh *et al.*, *Pañjābī sāhit dā itihās (madh kāl)*, section 5 (*Pañjābī gadd*), pp. 20–8.

[3] *GNSR*, pp. 151–8.

B40 Janam-sākhī. Such passages are normally confined to particular sākhīs and are of considerable help in identifying changes of source within both janam-sākhīs. This may be illustrated by three consecutive sākhīs from the *Ādi Sākhīs* collection. The brief narrative portion of sākhī 25 runs as follows:

tā phiri gurū horu sāgu kītā. bāki diā sikhā de vāsate. sūriā age litiā. dui kute nāli lite. laki chhurā badhā. je koi sā so sabh bhaji gae. koi ṭhaharāi na sakiu. tā sabh lage ākhani nānak bhalā fakir sā par devānā hūā. bhalā fakir kāmal daraves sā. paru devānā hūā. dhānakau raliā. tā bābe siri rāg vichi sabadu kītā . . .¹

This is unmistakably Pañjābī, and so too is the even briefer narrative portion of sākhī 26. There is, however, a hint of difference. The passage is in fact an editorial link connecting sākhīs 25 and 27:

jab ehu goṣṭi kari chuke tab gorakh nāth bābe no kahiā nānak tū pūrā purakh hai paru jog de ghari āu. tab bābā nānak boliā . . .²

In sākhī 27 the compiler, having changed his source, abandons the Pañjābī of the earlier source.

bābe nānak kau udāsi jo upaji chak te chaliā jātā thā. dekhai tā eku bāgu hai udiān ke bikhai. . . .³

This is not unadulterated Kharī Bolī but certainly it is much closer to Kharī Bolī than to the Pañjābī of the preceding sākhīs. It is Sādhukkarī of the kind so commonly found in the Ādi Granth and in the non-Pañjābī portions of the janam-sākhīs. Even within a passage as brief as this one both the Kharī Bolī base and Pañjābī supplement are evident.⁴

In the *Ādi Sākhīs* Sādhukkarī is subordinate to Pañjābī, and in the *B40 Janam-sākhī* this same relationship is even more pronounced. Within the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, however, the balance moves strongly in the opposite direction. Although Pañjābī passages do occur, and although the *Miharbān* Sādhukkarī betrays ample evidence of Pañjābī influence, the language of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* must nevertheless be distinguished from the Pañjābī which, with varying blends of dialect, dominates all other janam-sākhīs. It is a distinction which corresponds to the fundamental difference separating the *Miharbān* tradition from the remainder of the janam-sākhī literature. Whereas the other janam-sākhīs are primarily concerned with popular narrative the *Miharbān* tradition is much more interested in religious discourse. Pañjābī was the natural language for the former and Sādhukkarī the appropriate language for the latter. In addition to its Pañjābī contribution the *Miharbān* language also includes elements derived from Braj.

The linguistic difference which distinguishes the *Miharbān* tradition

---

¹ *AS*, p. 84. The remainder of the sākhī consists of a recitation of the shabad *Sirī Rāg* 29.
² *AS*, pp. 84–5. The remainder of the sākhī consists of a recitation of five stanzas of the *Japjī Sāhib*.
³ *AS*, p. 86.
⁴ For a more detailed examination of the B40 language see the introduction to *B40(Eng)*.

from all other janam-sākhīs has been considerably obscured by a consistent use of the Gurmukhī script. Although the distinction between Pañjābī language and the Gurmukhī script is now clearly understood there still persists a tendency to assume that Gurmukhī is used only for Pañjābī. The *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* provides an important example of the fallacy of this assumption. The same regular use of the Gurmukhī script is shared by all janam-sākhī traditions, regardless of their linguistic content.

SECTION II

5
THE ORIGINS AND GROWTH OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪ TRADITIONS

The ultimate origin of all the janam-sākhī traditions is the person of Nānak or, to be more precise, an interpretation of that person. Nānak had recast a particular range of popular religious doctrine in a uniquely coherent form, expressing it in poetry of a compelling directness and beauty. It was natural that such qualities should attract disciples, and those who in this manner gathered around their chosen teacher during the early decades of the sixteenth century constituted the nucleus of the *Nānak-panth*, 'the community of those owing allegiance to Nānak'. These were the first Sikhs, a word which in its literal sense means simply 'learner' or 'disciple'. It was in this sense that it was first used to describe the early followers of Gurū Nānak and only gradually did it acquire the distinctive and more restricted meaning which it now possesses. Although the Gurmukhī script makes no provision for capitalization the conventions of written English permit us to express the process in terms of a gradual change from 'sikh' to 'Sikh', from 'disciples' to 'Disciples'.[1]

Inevitably there developed within this community an interpretation of the life and teachings of its first Master. A religious community can have neither purpose nor coherence without a distinctive pattern of belief, and when such a community owes a conscious allegiance to a particular person it must assuredly incorporate within that pattern a particular understanding of the Master's mission and message. In the case of the emergent *nānak-panthī* or *sikh* community this understanding constitutes what we have already called the myth of Nānak. It is this myth which provided, and continues to provide, the source and origin of the ever-evolving janam-sākhī traditions.

At this point a clarification of terms is needed. Although the myth of

[1] A *Miharbān* commentator claims that in the earlier period the word *sikh* was reserved for the Hindu disciples of Nānak. Muslim disciples were called *murīd*. *Mih JS* II. 414. The other term commonly used in the janam-sākhīs to designate a follower of Nānak is, predictably, *nānak-panthī*. Although the term *nānak-panthī* is rarely used nowadays, the word *panth* from which it derives provides another example of the process which can be represented in terms of a change from the lower case to the upper case. The word *panth*, in its normal usage, designates a 'sect' or definable area of Indian religious tradition distinguished by loyalty to a particular teacher or adherence to particular doctrines. In this sense it clearly implies distinctiveness *within* Hindu tradition and society, and in this sense the early community of Nānak's followers may be properly designated a *panth*. As the community began to develop a consciousness of sharp differentiation *panth* tended increasingly to become *Panth*. In other words, it came to represent a religious community *distinct from* Hindu society. This distinction, however, has never become absolute. Whereas some Sikhs will draw the line with all possible clarity, others seem to be unaware of its existence.

Nānak has just been described as the source of the janam-sākhīs the word 'source' will not hereafter be used in this sense. Instead it will be reserved for the section which discusses the compilation of extant manuscript collections.[1] In all instances it is evident that the copyists responsible for the manuscripts now extant must have had access to one or more earlier manuscripts. These earlier manuscripts served as sources for the composite products we now possess and it is in this sense that the word will normally be used. The only extension beyond this usage will be to cover borrowings made by these copyists from developed oral traditions. It will be shown, for example, that the *B40* compiler has copied material from at least two recognizable manuscripts, and that he has drawn another substantial cluster of anecdotes from the oral tradition of his own area.[2] Both the oral tradition and the manuscripts will be referred to as sources, and the term will normally be limited to this usage.

This means that another term will be required to designate the materials utilized by those responsible for the earliest traditions. A few anecdotes can presumably be traced to actual incidents in the life of Nānak; others were obviously borrowed direct from even earlier pre-Nānak sources; and many developed organically in accordance with processes of varying complexity. In all three cases 'sources' were required in order to provide either the complete anecdote or the elements which were drawn together to form one. Wherever possible these 'sources' will be covered by the term 'constituents'. The word will have a particular relevance to the earliest traditions, but because the janam-sākhīs have persisted in growing there has always been a continuing if irregular inflow of constituents. For this reason the term will also be applied to the materials which, to the present day, continue to supply extra details or additional anecdotes. Occasionally it will be convenient to use the word 'sources' when indicating the origin of these elements, but its usage will be restricted and will be accompanied by a reference to the constitutents which derive from any such origin.

It seems safe to assume that the earliest of all constituents must have been authentic memories concerning actual incidents from the life of Nānak. Anecdotes concerning the Master will have begun to circulate during the Master's own lifetime, and although his actual presence will not have prevented the addition of legendary details it will certainly have served to inhibit their entry into the earliest tradition. They will have been added more as embroidery. The fabric will have been the narrative of authentic incidents.

This period was, however, brief, and an examination of the janam-sākhī literature plainly demonstrates that the vast bulk of their material entered the tradition after the death of Nānak. For this subsequent period of expansion three constituents proved to be of particular importance. One was the body of received tradition current in the Pañjāb during the seventeenth century. Some of the material which entered the janam-sākhīs in this manner has obviously been taken from the Epics and the

[1] See below, pp. 174ff.
[2] See below, pp. 187–94, 197–210, 220–6. See also the introduction to *B40(Eng)*, pp. 11–15.

Purāṇas. Other features evidently derive from the distinctive legends of the Nāth yogīs, and yet others betray a Sūfī origin. All three varieties represent a natural process. The Pañjāb of this period was impregnated with Puranic lore, and both the Nāths and the Sūfīs combined a considerable reputation with a well-stocked treasury of legend. Living within such a context the janam-sākhī narrators were inevitably directed by its more powerful influences.

The second of the major constituents was provided by the poetic works composed by Nānak for the benefit of his followers. There are many examples to be found in the janam-sākhīs of anecdotes which have been developed out of particular hymns by the Gurū, or out of isolated references from various compositions. Whenever this occurs in a sākhī the hymn which prompts the anecdote will be quoted during the course of the narrative, normally as the answer given by Nānak to an interlocutor or as his comment on the episode which provides the substance of the sākhī.

Although this is an important constituent it should be noted that all such quotations from the works of Nānak are not to be explained as the seeds from which their associated anecdotes grew. Many of the hymns which appear in the janam-sākhīs represent later additions to evolved sākhīs. A hymn introduced in this manner was normally added because its theme seemed to accord well with the subject of a particular anecdote. In other cases a hymn has evidently been quoted because the narrator wished to add to the hymn his own commentary on it. When this occurs in one of the narrative janam-sākhīs it commonly reflects a doctrinal issue current within the later community, the hymn with its commentary serving to express a particular view concerning the issue. Yet other hymns have been added to sākhīs for reasons which now elude us. In some cases the reason may have been nothing more than a narrator's partiality.

Most of the hymns quoted in the janam-sākhīs are by Nānak and are to be found in the Ādi Granth. In such instances the janam-sākhīs invariably depart from the standard Ādi Granth text and in some quotations their variant readings diverge extensively. A few hymns which are attributed by the janam-sākhīs to Nānak are listed in the Ādi Granth as the works of later Gurūs, and a number do not appear in the Ādi Granth at all. In the analysis which follows compositions of the latter kind are described as apocryphal. This they probably are, and in some cases there can be no doubt whatsoever. There remains, however, the possibility that genuine works may have escaped the Ādi Granth and yet been retained in an oral tradition later used by a janam-sākhī compiler.

The third of the important constituents was more restricted in scope than either the influence of received tradition or the impulses derived from Nānak's own words. This third element was provided by the continuing influence within the Sikh community of an ascetic tradition. Although Nānak himself had spurned extreme asceticism the conviction was too deeply rooted in Indian tradition to be easily eradicated and its influence emerges at several points in the janam-sākhīs.

Four principal constituents may accordingly be discerned in the

janam-sākhīs. The first of these is fundamental in that it provided the original impulse and a significant portion of the earliest traditions. This is the authentic material derived from actual episodes in the life of Nānak. Subsequently this element comes to be vastly overshadowed by materials derived from received tradition, the works of Nānak, and resurgent ascetic ideals. These constituents are discussed at greater length in chapter 6.

This is followed in chapter 7 by a description of the various literary forms which have been used in order to give expression to these traditions. A preliminary survey of the janam-sākhī forms indicates an obvious division into two categories. First there are the narrative anecdotes; and secondly the numerous discourses which Nānak is said to have conducted. There is, however, a more meaningful distinction which becomes evident when the various discourses are analysed. This would link with the anecdotes the type of discourse which contains a strong narrative element, separating these two forms from the remainder of the discourses.

The first two forms we shall designate the *narrative anecdote* and the *narrative discourse*. The *narrative anecdote* is the janam-sākhī form *par excellence*. Sākhīs which employ it are normally brief and succinct, although a more complicated pattern sometimes emerges. During the later stages of janam-sākhī evolution composite sākhīs are commonly formed by grouping anecdotes which concern a single person, place, or theme. Some of these clusters enjoy a particular popularity and continue to grow as extra sub-sākhīs are added. The various traditions concerning Bābā Nānak's visit to Mecca provide a good example of this combination and growth process.

Narrative discourses are closely allied to the anecdotal form in terms of purpose, but can be easily distinguished in terms of structure. The term *narrative discourse* has been reserved for conversation pieces which have been developed out of quotations from the works of Gurū Nānak. A shabad or a shalok by the Gurū is sometimes incorporated within a sākhī in a manner which plainly marks it as the actual origin of the story in which it is set. In such instances the Gurū's actual composition serves as his answer, or series of answers, to questions or comments which are fashioned to suit the given reply. Several simple stories, communicating the same message as the narrative anecdotes, have been constructed in this manner.

These two narrative forms provide the bulk of the material recorded by the *Purātan* and *Bālā* janam-sākhīs, *B40*, the *Ādi Sākhīs*, and the *Gyān-ratanāvalī*. There are, however, two other distinctive forms which make occasional appearances in all of them. Both are discourses and both can be distinguished in terms of structure, content, and intention. One of them dominates the *Miharbān* tradition, thereby providing a clear line of demarcation between the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* and all other important janam-sākhīs. This line can be drawn with a sharpness which might suggest that the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* is not really a janam-sākhī at all. Any such conclusion would, however, mean carrying the distinction too

far, for although the demarcation is certainly clear it cannot be regarded as an absolute one. The *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* differs not because it has abandoned the characteristic features of the janam-sākhī but because it has incorporated them within something larger.

The primary difference between the distinctively *Miharbān* variety of discourse and those of the narrative janam-sākhīs is the consciously preceptive nature of the former. For this reason it will be referred to as *didactic discourse*. Once again there are individual instances which are not easy to classify, but these are very rare. The shift of interest from narrative to doctrine is usually obvious, and is plainly reflected in the discourse structure which has been developed to give expression to doctrinal concerns.

The didactic discourse is, in a sense, an extension of the narrative discourse, for it commonly uses the narrative variety as a basis. The narrative form is however little more than a point of departure, a convenient framework within which to set the distinctively doctrinal portion of the discourse. Narrative settings and the introduction of interlocutors provide a context for the basic pedagogical purpose. This purpose was to provide an explanation or interpretation of Gurū Nānak's own works, an intention which seems to have been directed primarily to members of the community (or particular groups within it) but which might also extend to others outside.

The hermeneutic purpose was served by first quoting a passage from the works of Nānak and then attaching to it an *exegetical supplement*. Discourses which had already developed within the narrative traditions were appropriated for this purpose and transformed by means of adding passages of exegesis to every individual quotation of a stanza, shabad, or shalok by Gurū Nānak. These were, however, soon exhausted, and a substantial majority of the didactic discourses have been constructed with the obvious intention of expounding particular passages from the works of Nānak.

This blend of discourse and commentary constitutes the distinctive *Miharbān* approach. Examples which are to be found in other janam-sākhīs normally represent borrowings from the *Miharbān* tradition. Each division of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* is called a *goṣṭ*, not a *sākhī*, and because these divisions embody something characteristically different the term *goṣṭ* has been retained as a convenient means of reference when dealing with the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*. Although its literal meaning is 'discourse' this translation will not be used for the *goṣṭ* form of the *Miharbān* tradition, this particular form being distinctively different from all other varieties of discourse. For the same reason the persons responsible for the development and transmission of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* will normally be designated commentators rather than narrators.

The exegetical portion of the *goṣṭ* is sometimes referred to as the *paramārath*. This is because the commentary which follows each quotation almost always begins with the formula *tis kā paramārath*, literally 'its sublime meaning'. The words 'is as follows' are understood, and the

formula thus serves to distinguish the exegesis from the quotation. Modern usage does this by means of indentation, together with a separate line in the text to correspond to each line of a hymn or poem. Lacking these conventions the *Miharbān* commentators had to devise a method of their own to mark off exegesis from quotation.[1]

The last major form to be noted makes only rare appearances in the janam-sākhīs. This is the *heterodox discourse*, an independent form which has occasionally provided janam-sākhī compilers with acceptable material. The origins of these discourses are to be found in heretical doctrines and gnostic interpretation of earlier esoteric traditions (principally Nāth and Sūfī) which have found expression in a small group of apocryphal works attributed to Gurū Nānak. Most of these compositions were of sufficient length to warrant independent circulation, and for this reason they were commonly recorded as separate works, distinct from the janam-sākhīs. Their claim to authenticity was evidently viewed with suspicion by some of the compilers, but others were sufficiently impressed to include selections in their janam-sākhīs. All are, without doubt, spurious. Neither their curious doctrines nor their banal expression could possibly be imputed to Gurū Nānak.

The principal forms employed by the janam-sākhī narrators and commentators may thus be divided into two groups:

Narrative
1. Narrative anecdotes
2. Narrative discourses

Non-narrative
1. Didactic discourses, comprising both
   (a) Narrative discourses, and
   (b) Exegetical supplements
2. Heterodox discourses

These four forms together account for practically all that the janam-sākhīs contain. Other forms are exceedingly rare.

The chapter describing the various janam-sākhī forms is followed by a brief examination of oral transmission procedures and of the manner in which selections drawn from oral tradition were gathered into the written collections to which the term janam-sākhī is properly applied. Four stages can be observed in the development of recorded janam-sākhīs. The first is the random collection, a phase which continued long after the emergence of the more intricate second and third stages. For some compilers it was, however, and inadequate method. Random collections of anecdotes were regarded as an unsatisfactory way of narrating the Gurū's life-story and there soon emerged an impulse to order disjointed traditions into a coherent chronological sequence. This constituted the second stage. The

---

[1] In the English translation of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* the formula *tis kā paramārath* has been rendered: 'The exegesis [of this stanza etc. is as follows].' See for example *B40*, ff. 118b, 119b. *B40(Eng)*, pp. 134, 136. In sākhī 2 of this janam-sākhī the formula is reduced to *tis kā arath* (perhaps an earlier form) and is translated: 'Its meaning [is as follows].' *B40*, ff. 4a–5b. *B40(Eng)*, pp. 8–9.

third followed when to the narrative anecdotes there were added exegetical passages; and the fourth when the introduction of the printing-press enabled particular recorded versions to be widely disseminated.

In chapter 9 the discussion proceeds to a more detailed examination of the manner in which the different kinds of sākhīs evolved. This examination consists largely of an analysis of representative types. In some instances an anecdotal sākhī turns out to be little more than a repetition of pre-Nānak tradition. Others are simple anecdotes which have been suggested by a particular reference in one of Nānak's compositions, or discourses of the kind already noted which have been constructed on the basis of a complete hymn or a series of quotations. In such cases the pattern is relatively uncomplicated and requires little elucidation. Elsewhere the origins and structure of particular sākhīs are found to be more complex. Most of the samples chosen for analysis have been taken from these more complicated sākhīs. This is partly because the need for explanation is obviously greater, but also because the complex sākhīs usually embody sub-sākhīs which serve to illustrate the simpler forms.

The period of evolution was, of course, an extended one and is in fact still continuing. New sākhīs, though now a mere trickle, are still appearing, and older sākhīs are commonly modified in accordance with contemporary needs and understanding. Perhaps the most striking example of the latter feature is provided by the story of the moving *miharāb*.[1] Most janam-sākhī versions set this anecdote in Mecca and relate how Bābā Nānak, when he reached the city, lay down to sleep in a mosque with his feet in the direction of the mosque's *miharāb*.[2] An outraged qāzī commanded him to point his feet away from the house of God. Nānak, in reply, invited him to lay his feet 'in whatever direction the house of God is not'.[3] Accepting the invitation the qāzī dragged Nānak's feet away from the direction of the *miharāb*, whereupon the *miharāb* itself moved. Wherever the qāzī laid Nānak's feet, there the *miharāb* also swung round. Confounded by this miracle the qāzī fell at his feet.

For modern readers a wonder story of this kind raises obvious problems. Some have suggested that the *miharāb* only *seemed* to move, but a much more popular solution has been to terminate the sākhī at the point where Nānak invites the qāzī to point the offending feet 'in whatever direction the house of God is not', omitting all that follows except for the qāzī's submission.[4] This produces a neat anecdote, one which is entirely acceptable to the modern reader. The dwelling-place of God is everywhere! It is not, however, what the earlier janam-sākhīs say. What it illustrates is the continuing process of change and development. Another example of the same process has recently been provided by a new tradition concerning a visit to Sikkim (an aetiological legend explaining the appearance of rice

¹ See below, pp. 137-44.
² The niche which is aligned with the Ka' bah, thereby indicating the *qibla*.
³ *B40*, f. 51b.
⁴ Tejā Singh and Gaṇḍā Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, vol. i (Bombay, 1950), p. 11. This rationalized interpretation appears in John Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs* (Calcutta, 1810), p. 274.

and banana cropping in North Sikkim).[1] In this instance the new development represents an expansion of the received tradition, not a rationalizing contraction.

The last chapter of this section deals with the various sources used by janam-sākhī compilers. All the extant janam-sākhīs, regardless of the stage or stages to which they belong, include anecdotes drawn from a multiplicity of sources. Oral tradition continued to provide much supplementary material, but in no instance does the compiler of an extant janam-sākhī appear to have relied solely upon oral sources. All had access to at least one earlier manuscript and sometimes more than one. Needless to say the compilers do not acknowledge their various sources and the task of distinguishing them can be highly complex. The analysis included in chapter 10 covers no more than a sample. Whereas the *B40 Janam-sākhī* and the *Ādi Sākhīs* are treated in some detail, references to other janam-sākhī traditions are generally limited to points of close contact with the two primary examples. Although this limitation is necessary within the scope of a single volume it is regrettable, for it must involve many omissions. Two janam-sākhīs which should produce interesting responses to the same variety of analysis are the *Colebrooke* and early *Bālā* versions.

[1] *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 329–33.

6
CONSTITUENTS OF THE
JANAM-SĀKHĪS

1. EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF NĀNAK

ALTHOUGH the mass of extant janam-sākhī material must be classified as legend there can be little doubt that the earliest constituent will have been actual observation and authentic memory. There can be no doubt whatsoever concerning the broad outline of Nānak's life, nor of the fact that a community of disciples gathered around him in the village of Kartārpur during the early decades of the sixteenth century. It is also clear that many of these disciples continued to live in their own villages and expressed their devotion to the Master through regular visits to Kartārpur rather than through permanent attendance upon his person. Under such circumstances it was inevitable that anecdotes concerning the Master should have begun to circulate amongst his dispersed followers. These early tales will have been subjected to processes of expansion and embellishment even during the lifetime of the Gurū, but the basis of many of them will have been episodes from his actual experience, or authentic utterances which he had in fact made.

The problem presented by the authentic elements in the extant janam-sākhīs is that of recognition. Although their presence may be undoubted so too is the extreme difficulty involved in separating them from the quantity of supplementary material which now envelops them. The historian who is concerned to identify these elements can hope to achieve a certain limited success, but the analysis is arduous and the product scant.

Fortunately the solution of this particular problem is not vital for an understanding of the janam-sākhīs, nor for an appreciation of their chief importance. The importance of the janam-sākhīs concerns the myth which they express, and for this expression authentic history and legend can be equally serviceable. It is the quest of the historical Nānak which imposes a rigorous obligation to separate the two. For an understanding of the myth of Nānak the separation is always of interest and can occasionally be helpful, but it is not absolutely essential. At this point it is sufficient to note that authentic incidents from the life of Nānak form one of the several constituents which have contributed to the growth of the janam-sākhīs. In terms of temporal priority these authentic elements are primary and must form the basis of some of the earliest sākhīs. In terms of quantity they are of relatively minor significance. For the major constituents in terms of quantity we must turn to three other elements. The first is

received tradition; the second is the corpus of Nānak's own compositions; and the third is a miscellany of ascetic ideals current during the period of janam-sākhī growth.

2. *RECEIVED TRADITION*

Received tradition in the Pañjāb of the janam-sākhī period consisted chiefly of an amalgam of Puranic lore, tales from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Yoga-vasiṣṭha*, Nāth legend, and Sūfī hagiography. Occasionally it is possible to trace a connection with the Buddhist *Jātaka*, as in the popular story of how a tree's shadow stood still in order to shelter the sleeping child Nānak from the rays of the sun.[1] This is one among several prominent *Wandersagen* elements appearing in the janam-sākhīs, mediated by a variety of received tradition. Others include triumph over carnal temptations, the miraculous opening of springs, homilies on the curse of wealth, flight on magic prayer-mats, and shelter afforded by a cobra's distended hood.

Although the various sources can often be distinguished, it is important to remember that for the rural Pañjāb of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they commonly constituted a single tangled tradition. This coalescence is particularly advanced in the relationship to Puranic and Nāth elements. Sūfī traditions, by reason of their connection with Muslim belief, maintain a somewhat clearer definition. The difference is, however, one of degree and it is not a marked one. It would be altogether misleading to suggest that the traditions associated with celebrated Sūfīs were immune from the influence of native Indian traditions, or that those native traditions were screened from Sūfī influence. There was, in fact, no real clarity of definition. Boundaries were always blurred and commonly crossed. Details, structures, and complete anecdotes might be associated with a Sūfī pīr, a Nāth Master, or a prominent *bhakta*. Villagers who worshipped with equal reverence at a Śaivite temple or a Muslim tomb would not always distinguish between elements drawn from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and those which derived from the *Hadīth*.[2]

This amalgam is faithfully reflected in much of the janam-sākhī material, particularly in the anecdotes which narrate encounters with Nāths. Needless to say, the point should not be laboured to the extent of suggesting that *all* janam-sākhī traditions necessarily manifest this composite character. In most cases of material derived from a received tradition it is possible to identify a dominant element and to label it Puranic, Epic, Nāth, or Sūfī. The point which does deserve to be laboured is the possibility of incorporating these diverse elements within a single tradition. To this possibility the extant janam-sākhīs bear ample witness.

One other misunderstanding which can easily arise from the composite

---

[1] *B40*, f. 9a. E. B. Cowell (ed.), *The Jataka*, vol. vi, pp. 246–7.

[2] The extent to which the exchange of ideas could be carried is well illustrated in the case of Nāths and Sūfīs by the *Rushd-nāma* of Sheikh 'Abd al-Quddūs (1456–1537). S. A. A. Rizvi and S. Zaidi, *Alakh Bānī* (Alīgaṛh, 1971).

nature of the janam-sākhīs is the assumption that the teachings of Gurū Nānak (as opposed to the traditions concerning his life) must necessarily reflect the same variety of synthesis. This misunderstanding is expressed in terms of a claim that the works of Nānak represent a blend of 'Hinduism' and 'Islam'. Although a diversity of influences can certainly be detected in Nānak's thought the synthesis to which he gave expression is not to be identified with that of the janam-sākhīs. Sūfī influence is much more pronounced in the janam-sākhīs than in the works of Nānak himself. The antecedents of Nānak's own thought are to be found primarily in the earlier Sant synthesis, and beyond this in the distinctive belief of Vaiṣṇava bhakti and in the haṭha-yoga of the Nāth tradition and other related cults.[1] Muslim influence, Sūfī and otherwise, is of marginal importance as far as the basic components of his thought are concerned. The janam-sākhīs, in contrast, show abundant evidence of the influence of Sūfī traditions. Whereas Nānak had found little of importance in contemporary Sūfī belief which was not already present in his Sant inheritance, his disciples found much in contemporary Sūfī hagiography to enrich their own narratives. It is partly to the Sūfī borrowings in the janam-sākhīs that the persistent misunderstanding of Nānak's own antecedents can be traced.

(a) *The Epics and the Purāṇas*

Puranic and Epic elements appear in the janam-sākhīs both as illustrative material and as the substance of particular sākhīs. The former application, which corresponds to Gurū Nānak's own usage of details from the Epics and the Purāṇas, is well illustrated by a passage which the *B40* compiler appends to an earlier narrative. The anecdote relates how Rājā Śivanābh tested Bābā Nānak by sending beautiful women to tempt him. To emphasize their comeliness the *B40* compiler adds:

> Their alluring appearance was like that of the Kāmkandalās, the seductive sirens of Raja Indra; or like the four temptresses of Vaikunṭh. Whoever looked upon them—[even such] supermen and sages [as] the sons of Brahmā, [the generations of saintly heroes from] Janak onwards [or] ascetics and master ascetics such as Ṛṣya Śṛṅga—would have lost their heads.[2]

In this instance the passage appears to be an interpolation introduced because the anecdote following it so strongly suggested the popular Epic theme of the holy man tempted. Elsewhere complete stories from the Epics or the Purāṇas are given a distinctively janam-sākhī expression. One example is provided by the sākhī entitled 'The Robbers and the Funeral-pyre',[3] an anecdote which can be traced to the story of Ajāmila in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.[4] Another which can be connected with a narrative in

---

[1] *GNSR*, p. 160.

[2] *B40*, ff. 146b–147a. Particular points occurring in the quotation are explained in the footnotes to the *B40* translation. See *B40* (*Eng*) p. 163. The *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler, following the same source, refers only to the supermen. *AS*, p. 65.

[3] *B40*, ff. 190b–193a. *Pur JS*, pp. 32–3.

[4] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, VI. 2. E. Burnouf, *Le Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, vol. ii, pp. 532–41. Purnendu Narayana Sinha, *A Study of the Bhāgavata Purāna* (Adyar, 1950), pp. 204–6.

the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is 'The Encounter with Kaliyug'.[1] This evidently derives its basic feature (notably the personification of the *Kaliyuga* or 'Age of Strife') from the episode concerning the chastisement of Kali by King Parīkṣit.[2] Both of these traditions entered the janam-sākhīs at an early date and acquired a considerable popularity. A later example appears in the *Mahimā Prakāś* story of how Gurū Aṅgad, having misunderstood a command of Bābā Nānak, remained rooted to the same spot for several years while ants gradually covered him with earth.[3] This tale can be traced to the *Mahābhārata* story of Ṛṣi Chyavana.[4]

The most prominent of all Puranic features to appear in the janam-sākhīs is Mount Sumeru (Mount Meru), legendary centre and axis of the earth and the setting for one of the most popular of all janam-sākhī discourses.[5] In this connection the 'Discourse on Mount Sumeru' is of particular interest for two reasons. First, it illustrates not merely the influence of Puranic legend, but also the manner in which Nāth and Puranic tradition are inextricably linked in the janam-sākhīs. The interlocutors in the discourse are Siddhs, which in this context plainly means Nāth Masters.

The second point of interest concerns the *Bālā* version of the discourse. Puranic influence is much more pronounced in the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs than in any of the others and at no point does this distinctive *Bālā* characteristic appear with greater prominence than in the mountain-climbing episodes which reach a climax in Bābā Nānak's ascent of Mount Sumeru.[6] The later *Bālā* janam-sākhīs also introduce sākhīs set in Govardhan, Mathurā, and Vrindāban, and from the details which they incorporate it is at once clear that they have derived their extra material from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.[7]

(b) *Nāth tradition*

The Nāth *sampradaya*, or sect of Nāth yogīs, is a feature of medieval Indian society which has received only a fragment of the attention which it deserves. This neglect derives partly from the condition of the sect when first it became an object of interest to European observers. Monserrate, who accompanied Akbar on a visit to the Nāth centre at Ṭillā, indicates the kind of impression which the sect made upon an observer during the late fifteenth century.

When they heard of the King's approaching visit, a huge number of the members of that sect gathered at this place, many of whom, in order to show off their sanctity, betook themselves stark naked to certain caves which either nature or

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 44a–47a. *Pur JS*, pp. 37–8. *AS*, pp. 28–31.
[2] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, I.17.28–41. Cf. also ibid. I.18.5–10. Kaliyug is also personified in the *Mahābhārata*, III.58–62, 72. For another example of a janam-sākhī borrowing from the *Mahābhārata* see below, p. 162.
[3] *SLTGN(Eng)*, p. 83. *SLTGN(Pbī)*, p. 44.   [4] *Mahābhārata*, III.122.
[5] *B40*, ff. 86a–93a. *AS*, pp. 36–42. *Pur JS*, pp. 94–7. *Mih JS* I.384–416.
[6] *Bālā JS*, pp. 200 ff.   [7] Expanded 1871 edition, sākhīs 251–2

the art of man has made there. Many people did reverence to these naked ascetics and proclaimed their sanctity abroad. They are however extremely greedy of money. All their trickery and pretended sanctity is aimed at the acquisition of gain.[1]

Monserrate does, however, indicate more than mere knavery. The description which he gives of the Ṭillā establishment is, by his standards, a lengthy one[2] and implies that during this period Ṭillā must have commanded a considerable interest. Indeed, his report that Akbar stayed four days and while there paid homage suggests that the sect commanded not just interest but positive respect. This need occasion no surprise. The ignorant and arrogant charlatans described by Monserrate and later European observers have never constituted the entire sect, and their reputation obscures the importance of their antecedents. The antecedents and the later reputation are both necessary aspects of any attempt to understand either the thought of Nānak or the content of the janam-sākhīs.

The word 'sect' is, as always, a misleading term to use as a translation of *panth* or *sampradaya*. There were in fact several sects of Nāth yogīs. They are regarded as a single panth because they share a common allegiance to Gorakhnāth, a common adherence to the *haṭha-yoga* technique, and the common observance of a particular custom. This is the practice of wearing large ear-rings (*mudrā*), a custom which has earned them the name of Kānphaṭ (or 'split-ear') yogīs.[3]

The antecedents of the Kānphaṭ yogīs can be traced to the ancient tradition of esoteric Tantrism. This much is clear, but it does not in fact tell us much about the actual origins of the cult for it merely leads us into one of the most obscure areas of early Indian tradition. Little is known of Tantrism apart from its later expressions and it is only by inference from these later expressions that its origins and its earlier development can be described. Many of these influences relate to the geographical location of the earliest developments. It was along the northern perimeter of Aryan culture, from the Afghan highlands along the Himālayas to Āssām, that tantric beliefs evolved and flourished. This indicates alien antecedents, and the incorporation of these exotic elements within a Hindu tradition has suggested that Tantrism must represent an assimilation of the kind which enabled Hindu culture to extend into regions on its periphery. A secondary centre of Tantrism in the Dravidian country supports this theory.[4]

Tantrism emerges in two streams, one Buddhist and the other Hindu. The former represents an obscure blend of tantric traditions and Mahāyāna Buddhism; and the latter an equally obscure blend of tantric and Śaivite

---

[1] *The Commentary of Father Monserrate, S.J.*, trans. J. S. Hoyland (London, 1922), p. 115. For a note on Ṭillā see B40(Eng), p. 193.

[2] Ibid., pp. 113–16.

[3] For a description of Nāth custom and belief see G. W. Briggs, *Gorakhnāth and the Kānphaṭa Yogīs* (Calcutta, 1938), *passim*; and Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults* (Calcutta, 1962), pp. 191–255. For an account of a Nāth establishment still surviving in the Pañjāb see B. N. Goswamy and J. S. Grewal, *The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar* (Simla, 1967).

[4] Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (London, 1958), pp. 201–2.

beliefs. Neither stream can be easily distinguished from the other, and later developments flowing from these earlier antecedents share their lack of clear definition. One important line seems to descend from Vajrayāna Buddhism (the classic Buddhist form of Tantrism) through Sahajiyā Buddhism to a Vaiṣṇava version of the Sahajiyā cult and thence through the Sant tradition of Northern India to Nānak himself.[1] Although the lines are by no means plain there can be no doubt concerning the Sant debt to a refined Tantrism. This is clear from the common denunciation of external forms of religion, from a common insistence upon an interior discipline, and from certain key terms which the Sants can only have derived from Sahajiyā usage.

The Nāths of Nānak's day and of the period following belonged to a different lineage. Once again it is impossible to trace the line of development with any clarity, but both the tantric origins and the radical distinction from the Sants are clear. The Nāth Masters are commonly called Siddhs, a feature which indicates a connection with the legendary Siddhācāryas of the Buddhist Sahajiyā cult[2]. From this source the yogic beliefs and practices of the Nāths have evidently descended without being affected by the devotional concepts of the Vaiṣṇavas. It was bhakti belief which transformed the Sahajiyā cult in its Vaiṣṇava expression. Unaffected by this deviant development the Nāths continued the distinctively *haṭha-yoga* version of the Sahajiyā *kāya-sādhana* ('culture of the body'). A particular prominence was accorded to belief in the nine Nāths, ·the legendary Masters who had achieved immortality through perfection in *haṭha-yoga* and who dwelt eternally in the further recesses of the Himālayas. Various lists of names are given for the nine Nāth Masters, all of them including the celebrated Gorakhnāth. Some lists name Mahādeva (Śiva) as one of the nine distinct from Gorakhnāth, whereas others merge the two.[3]

By the sixteenth century the various Nāth sects had achieved a considerable diffusion over Northern India, with two major centres in the Pañjāb and Nepāl. They were by this time in decline, but still commanded awe and a certain grudging respect for their extreme asceticism and their reputation as wonder-workers. The extent of their influence in the Pañjāb is plainly indicated by the number of compositions which Nānak addresses to Nāth yogīs. The same compositions also demonstrate the vigorous nature of Nānak's opposition to their teachings and their practices.

The reputation of the Nāths continued into the janam-sākhī period and its influence upon the evolving janam-sākhī traditions is patently clear. The attitude of the janam-sākhī narrators is ambivalent. On the one hand they naturally accept the case made by Nānak, and in both discourse and magical contest the Nāths are always worsted. On the other hand they give expression to a genuine respect for the person of Gorakhnāth. Although long since dead at the time when the janam-sākhīs were developing Gorakhnāth is a prominent choice as interlocutor for Nānak's discourses, and the pattern

---

[1] Shashibhusan Dasgupta, op. cit., pp. 51–2, 164–5, 345–6. *GNSR*, pp. 151–8, 191–2, 224–5.
[2] Shashibhusan Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 202.   [3] Ibid., pp. 191–7, 202–9.

which these discourses follow is generally one of accord between the two participants rather than the customary defeat.[1] It is Gorakhnāth who indicates a choice of succession to Bābā Nānak[2] and in the *Mahimā Prakāś* tradition it is he who first recognizes Nānak's greatness.[3]

One of the most prominent of the Nāth discourses, 'The Discourse on Mount Sumeru', has already been noted as an example of the manner in which the janam-sākhīs combine Nāth and Puranic legend in a single tradition. In this respect they merely reflect the Nāths' own understanding and that of sixteenth-century Pañjāb. The actual origin of this particular discourse is a series of shaloks by Guru Nānak which refer to several of the Nāth Masters by name.[4] To the names given by Nānak and the questions implied by his verses the janam-sākhīs have added the Puranic setting and many of the details needed in order to sustain the narrative. The chosen setting indicates that the legend concerning the immortal Masters was implicitly accepted by the janam-sākhī narrators and their audiences. It also illustrates the common confusion of the nine immortal Nāths with the eighty-four immortal Siddhs. Whereas the names of the interlocutors are those of Nāth Masters, Bhāī Gurdās and all his successors refer to them as representatives of the eighty-four Siddhs.[5]

A sākhī which owes rather more to the current reputation of the Nāths is the Achal discourse.[6] Like the Mount Sumeru discourse this sākhī derives in part from Nāth-oriented compositions by Nānak, but it deals with yogīs rather than immortal Masters and accords a particular prominence to their reputed power as wonder-workers. In the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs the wonder-working material is incorporated in a sākhī set in Gor-khatrī, a Nāth centre in Peshāwar.[7] Other discourse settings are Ṭillā,[8] Gorakh-matā,[9] Setu-bandha,[10] and 'in the midst of the ocean'.[11]

Most of the discourses are, like the Mount Sumeru sākhī, only partially derived from Nāth legend. The basis is generally provided by a shabad or series of shaloks from the works of Gurū Nānak, almost always a composition which by terminology or actual name indicates a Nāth audience. Nāth legend serves to supplement this basis with appropriate settings, details, and occasionally a sub-sākhī. It is an important supplement, one which bears eloquent testimony to the continuing influence of Nāth yogīs upon rural Pañjāb. The same influence emerges even more prominently in the apocryphal *Prāṇ Saṅgalī*, a work attributed to Nānak but expressing Nāth concepts of precisely the kind rebutted by the Gurū in his authentic compositions. The *Prāṇ Saṅgalī*, having penetrated the Sikh community or evolved within it, was soon appropriated by janam-sākhī

---

[1] Cf. *B40* sākhīs 23, 27b, and 53, ff. 86a–93b, 106b–110a, 208a–209a.

[2] *B40*, f. 93a.   [3] *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 59–60. *GNM*, pp. 7–8.

[4] *Vār Rāmkalī*, 12:2–7, *AG*, pp. 952–3. *GNSR*, p. 11.

[5] *BG* I:28. *B40*, f. 86a.

[6] *B40*, ff. 117a–122a. See below, pp. 146–58.

[7] *Pur JS*, pp. 104–6. *GNSR*, p. 49. The janam-sākhīs call the place Gorakh-haṭaṛī. See below, pp. 146–51.

[8] *B40*, f. 182a. *Mih JS* I.469. *Bālā JS*, pp. 308–11.

[9] *GR*, p. 203. *Pur JS*, pp. 27–8.   [10] *Bālā JS*, pp. 282–7.   [11] *Pur JS*, p. 84.

compilers.[1] Other apocryphal works used as sources for the janam-sākhīs provide further evidence of Nāth influence in certain sections of the post-Nānak community. An example is the *B40* sākhī 'Discourse with Kabīr'.[2]

One anecdote which can be traced directly to a Nāth source appears in the sākhī entitled 'The Country ruled by Women'.[3] This anecdote has enjoyed a notable popularity amongst the compilers of janam-sākhīs and varying versions are to be found in all collections except the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*. The source of the anecdote is plainly the Nāth legend which relates the seduction of Machhendranāth (Matsyendranāth, or Mīnanāth). According to this legend Machhendranāth, while in the womb of a fish, overheard Śiva expounding the secret of the universe to his consort Gaurī. Machhendranāth subsequently made slighting remarks concerning Gaurī and as a result of her curse was transformed into a sheep by the women of Kadalī. From this sorry fate he was rescued by Gorakhnāth.[4] In spite of its more grotesque elements the janam-sākhīs' version of the anecdote has enjoyed a continuing popularity because two of them set it in an area variously called Kaurū or Kārū. This obviously indicates Kāmrūp, long regarded as the home of Tantrism and the darker magical crafts. Modern biographers have assumed that the Kāmrūp setting indicates a visit by Guru Nānak to Āssām.[5]

(c) *Sūfī tradition*

In the use which they make of Nāth contacts the janam-sākhī compilers were, in large measure, following a pattern which had earlier been developed in Sūfī hagiography. A recent study of this aspect of Sūfī tradition enumerates three varieties of anecdote concerning encounters between yogīs and Sūfī pīrs.

Three classes of anecdotes regarding Jogīs in the Sūfī literature of the Dehli Sultanate can be arranged in a series of progressive elaboracy viz:—

(1) Plain anecdotes of the voluntary conversion of Jogīs followed by their attainment of a high 'station' on the Sūfī 'path'.

(2) Anecdotes of magic contests leading to the subjugation and conversion of the Jogī, again usually followed by his attainment of a high Sūfī station.

(3) Anecdotes of magic contest and conversion which have a regional significance, in that the Jogī is displaced as the *locum tenens* of a sacred or otherwise desirable site by the Sūfī Shaykh. Professing Islam and attaining a Sūfī 'station', the Jogī is accommodated in a subordinate capacity on the same holy site, or as an esteemed member of the Shaykh's entourage.[6]

This list indicates a striking but altogether natural similarity of Sūfī and janam-sākhī styles. The only significant difference is the extensive use

---

[1] See below, pp. 103–4.   [2] *B40*, ff. 136a–138a.
[3] *B40*, ff. 83a–85b. *Pur JS*, pp. 33–7. *AS*, pp. 26–8.
[4] Shashibhusan Dasgupta, op. cit., pp. 201–2, 244, 368n.   [5] *GNSR*, pp. 110–12.
[6] S. Digby, unpublished paper, 'Encounters with Jogis in Indian Sufi Hagiography'. For a discussion of the influence of Nāth doctrine upon Indian Sūfīs see S. A. A. Rizvi, 'Sufis and Natha Yogis in Mediaeval Northern India (XII–XVI Centuries)', *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia*, vol. vii, nos. 1 and 2, pp. 119–33.

made by the janam-sākhī narrators of passages from the works of Nānak. The close resemblance at this particular point indicates one of the janam-sākhī affinities with Sūfī hagiography. Other debts of an even more obvious nature can be observed throughout the janam-sākhī collections. Just as the Nāth discourses bear witness to a continuing Nāth influence in the Pañjāb of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so in like manner do the numerous encounters with Sūfī pīrs testify to the extent of Sūfī influence. It must, however, be stressed that the influence derived from the hagiography of the Sūfīs and the personal fame of some of the more prominent pīrs. It did not derive from any extensive understanding of Muslim doctrine. Knowledge of the doctrines of Islam and the contents of the Qur'ān is conspicuously absent from the janam-sākhīs. The insistent interest of the janam-sākhī narrators in folklore traditions and their general ignorance of Muslim doctrines are both well illustrated by the following extract from the *Bālā* account of Bābā Nānak's visit to Mecca.

It is written in the *qibla* that one day a dervish named Nānak will come and that water will spring in the well of Mecca.[1]

Once again there emerges a contrast between the understanding of the janam-sākhīs and that of Nānak himself. Gurū Nānak, though relatively little influenced by Muslim doctrine, certainly possessed an extensive knowledge of it and commonly made use of its terminology.

In some instances janam-sākhī narrators have incorporated distinctively Sūfī features in anecdotes concerning Bābā Nānak. Many of these are easily recognized, particularly those which use a demonstrably Muslim context for stories involving miraculous locomotion, levitation, or *ṭai-i-safar* (instantaneous transportation achieved by the mere closing of the eyes). The *B40* story of the moving mosque of Kābul illustrates this variety of miraculous locomotion,[2] and Bhāi Gurdās provides an example of levitation in his account of how Bābā Nānak ascended into the air during his visit to Bāghdād.[3] The *ṭai-i-safar* tradition has been of occasional use to janam-sākhī compilers who have not followed chronological patterns in their order of sākhīs. When confronted by an evident need to explain how Bābā Nānak could traverse hundreds of miles in an instant they commonly found their solution in recourse to the example of Sūfī hagiographers.[4]

One specific application by the Sūfīs of their belief in miraculous movement of objects as a proof of spiritual power is the tradition that the Ka'bah may revolve around a pīr of the most exalted status. Ordinarily the Muslim circumambulates the Ka'bah, but in cases of supreme spiritual achievement the roles are reversed. It seems clear that one of the key elements in the janam-sākhī story of the moving *miharāb* should be traced

---

[1] *Bālā JS*, p. 184. The *Purātan* janam-sākhīs give *kitābān* instead of *qibla*. Pur *JS*, p. 99.
[2] *B40*, f. 154b.
[3] *BG* 1:36. *GNSR*, p. 35.
[4] This is a common feature in the chronologically disorganized *Bālā* janam-sākhīs. Cf. also *B40*, ff. 123b, 133b, 157a, 178a.

to this tradition.[1] Although the earliest version of the sākhī appears to have been given a setting away from Mecca[2] the movement of a *miharāb* amounts to the same thing as movement of the Ka'bah. The *miharāb* marks the *qibla* (the direction of the Ka'bah), and a mobile *miharāb* can only mean a corresponding movement of the Ka'bah.

In all of these Sūfī instances the janam-sākhī anecdote has been constituted by a combining of recognizably Sūfī elements with other material. This is the characteristic form of janam-sākhī borrowing. Occasionally, however, two other forms of direct borrowing may be noted. The first is the narration of a Sūfī anecdote in a manner which retains its earlier connection with a Sūfī pīr, but which sets the entire episode in the context of an encounter with Bābā Nānak. An example of this form is the *Purātan* story of a meeting with Sheikh Farīd in the legendary land of Āsā. One of the three anecdotes included in this sākhī describes Farīd's attempt to maintain a rigorous ascetic discipline by carrying a wooden loaf (*chapātī*). This he did in order to provide an excuse for refusing proffered food. The anecdote, which properly belongs to the traditions concerning Farīd, retains this connection in the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs. The difference is that the meeting with Bābā Nānak convinces Farīd of the dangerous hypocrisy involved in the stratagem, as a result of which he abandons the wooden *chapātī*.[3]

Elsewhere a complete, or substantially complete, anecdote borrowed from Sūfī hagiography has been deprived of its Sūfī context and attached directly to the person of Bābā Nānak. The most striking example is Bhāī Gurdās's story of Nānak's encounter with the pīrs of Multān.[4] This anecdote, which is discussed below as an example of a *Wandersage*,[5] has obviously been taken directly from Sūfī traditions centring on Multān. Another example, also derived from a Multān source, is the Sūfī tradition concerning the manner in which Sheikh Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā died.[6]

In addition to the direct borrowings, Sūfī influence is also evident in the choice of interlocutors for several of the janam-sākhī discourses. Sūfī pīrs commanded a considerable respect in the Pañjāb of the janam-sākhī period and it was of vital importance to the purpose of the janam-sākhīs that their reputations should be eclipsed by that of Bābā Nānak. The fact that the more impressive of Sūfī reputations were attached to pīrs long since dead did not affect the need to involve such men in discourses with Nānak and to demonstrate the superiority of the latter. There is no suggestion of conscious deceit at this point. Neither the janam-sākhī narrators nor their audiences were historians. History and legend could both serve their purpose and, as we have already observed, a consciousness of sharp distinctions between the two should never be expected in the janam-sākhīs. The discourses held with Sūfī pīrs of earlier centuries must be regarded as illustrations of the Nānak myth of the janam-sākhīs rather than as examples of their narrators' credulity.

[1] *B40*, f. 51b.   [2] See below, p. 140.
[3] *Pur JS*, p. 45. *GNSR*, pp. 42, 80.   [4] *BG* 1:44. *GNSR*, pp. 35, 142.
[5] See below, pp. 118–20.   [6] See below, p. 119n.

As a result of this need to contest the hold of Sūfī tradition the janam-sākhī compilers have sprinkled a series of appropriate discourses through their collections. In the *B40 Janam-sākhī* Bābā Nānak is said to have encountered, at various times, Rukn al-Dīn, Rattan Hājī, Ibrāhīm Farīd Sānī, and Sharaf al-Dīn.[1] Of these only Sheikh Ibrāhīm could have been a contemporary of Gurū Nānak. With the exception of Rattan Hājī all appear in the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs, where they are joined by Farīd al-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i-Shakar and Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā,[2] both of whom had long predeceased the birth of Nānak. Other janam-sākhīs add more names. Bhāī Gurdās and the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* both describe encounters with 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī;[3] the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak* introduces Sākhī Sarvār Sultān;[4] and eventually Santokh Singh finds a place for the celebrated Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī, Pīr of Multān and preceptor of Rūmī.[5] The same figure does not always appear in the same setting. Sheikh Sharaf is variously located in Pāṇipat, Bāghdād, Bidar, and Mecca; Rukn al-Dīn is to be found in Mecca and Multān; and Jīlānī in Bāghdād and Kartārpur. Inconsistencies of this kind are, however, of no more importance than the fact that all three pīrs were long since dead. It is the pīrs' function which is important.

3. *THE WORKS OF GURŪ NĀNAK*

A second major constituent in the formation of the janam-sākhī traditions was provided by references in Nānak's own works. One important example of this feature has already been noted. In *Vār Rāmkali*, shaloks 2–7 of *pauṛi* 12, Gurū Nānak refers by name to Īsar, Gorakh, Gopīchand, Charapaṭ, and Bharatharī, all of whom figure prominently in lists of the seven legendary Nāth Masters.[6] Whereas Gurū Nānak's own intention was clearly the expression of an imaginary dialogue, the janam-sākhī narrators quickly assumed an actual encounter. Elements from Puranic and Nāth legend were added and the result was the ever-popular 'Discourse on Mount Sumeru'. Other compositions employing Nāth names and terminology prompted similar discourses, and in like manner works which made prominent use of Muslim tradition or imagery soon found their way into sākhīs describing encounters with Sūfī pīrs. Works of this kind rarely indicate a specifically Sūfī audience, but Sūfīs were, like Nāth yogīs, prominent in seventeenth-century Pañjāb and it is natural that the janam-sākhīs should reflect this prominence.

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 53a, 56a, 57b, 200a.　　　　[2] *Pur JS*, pp. 22, 40, 52, 82, 100, 104, 108.

[3] *BG* 1:35-6. *Mih JS* 11.179. Bhāī Gurdās refers to him as Dastgīr, one of the many names applied to Jīlānī. *GNSR*, p. 126.

[4] *SLTGN(Eng)*, p. 72. For notes on Sākhī Sarvār see W. Crooke, *The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, vol. ii (London, 1896), pp. 208–11; R. C. Temple, *The Legends of the Panjab*, vol. i (Bombay and London, 1884), p. 66; and *GTC* i, p. 566.

[5] *NPr* 11.37(4). See *B40 (Eng)*, p. 59n. See also R. C. Temple, op. cit., vol. iii, pp, 90–1. R. A. Nicholson, *Rumi: Poet and Mystic* (London, 1950), p. 19. *ASI 1872–73*, p. 135. Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*, vol. iii (London, 1839), pp. 116–17.

[6] *AG*, pp. 952-3. See above, p. 69 and below, p. 148.

In such cases a complete shabad would normally be responsible for the discourse or anecdote. Elsewhere a brief reference or even a single word might be sufficient to spark the imagination. The words *lālo* in *Tilaṅg* 5, *sajjaṇ* in *Sūhī* 3, and *mūlā* in *Surplus Shaloks 21* have all been interpreted as proper names and as such have served as starting-points for prominent anecdotes.[1]

Sākhīs which have been developed out of compositions by Gurū Nānak are a common feature of all janam-sākhīs. When, as in most instances, the resultant sākhī takes the form of a discourse the process is generally as follows. Gurū Nānak's own words, as expressed in a suggestive shabad or shalok, provide, as a nucleus for the discourse, answers to an interlocutor's questions. A suitable person is chosen to serve as interlocutor (one to whom Nānak's words might appropriately have been directed), and the questions or comments to be uttered by him are framed in accordance with the known answer. This provides the basic pattern. The interlocutor's question or comment is followed by a shalok or by the first stanza of a shabad. Another question or comment is followed by the second stanza or another shalok, and so the discourse proceeds until the shabad has been completed or the supply of suitable shaloks is exhausted. A setting is provided in order to introduce the discourse and in a brief conclusion the interlocutor submits to the Gurū.

This is the standard procedure. It is, however, by no means invariable. A narrator's imagination was not limited to the images suggested by the text of Gurū Nānak's actual compositions and commonly it would range much more widely. This was particularly the case when the starting-point for a sākhī was provided by a single word or reference. It was, for example, inevitable that Nānak's references to Bābur and, in a less explicit way, to the Mughal invasions should attract attention. The resultant sākhīs do not, however, follow the pattern indicated by any of the shabads which include these references, for in no case are they well suited to discourse purposes. Instead the narrators utilize traditions concerning Bābur (notably the belief that he was a clandestine qalandar) and authentic memories relating to the Mughal conquest of the Pañjāb. The shabads evidently prompt the anecdotes and in this sense constitute their origin, but make only a small contribution to the substance of the narrative.[2]

The imagination of the narrator finds further expression during the period of subsequent circulation. Simple discourses become progressively longer and more complex, with extra details and complete episodes being drawn in from other sources. Some sākhīs which have evolved out of shabads or shaloks retain their individuality throughout this period of expansion, whereas others are combined to form a complex of sub-sākhīs. The Bābur narratives provide examples of both. The earlier traditions retain their central position, but extra material is added. This supplementary material includes a discourse developed in accordance with the standard process out of the shabad *Tilaṅg* 2. The shabad begins:

[1] See below, pp. 86–7, 121, 122.
[2] *B40*, ff. 66b, 73a(2). *GNSR*, pp. 132–8.

Fear of Thee, O Lord, is my bhang, and my mind
the pouch in which I carry it.
Intoxicated with this bhang I have abandoned all
interest in worldly concerns.[1]

Here the suggestive prompt is provided by the word bhang (cannabis).
The narrator's task is relatively simple. Bābur, having heard Bābā Nānak
sing an earlier shabad, has him brought to his presence. The earlier
shabad is repeated and Bābur is converted. At this point the bhang sub-
sākhī is introduced.

[Bābur] then opened his bhang-pouch and offered it to Bābā Nānak, saying,
'Have some bhang, faqīr.'[2]

To this Bābā Nānak replies:

Mīrjī, I have already eaten bhang. I have taken a kind of bhang which induces a
condition of permanent intoxication.[3]

He then recites *Tilaṅg* 2 and the sākhī moves on to another episode. A
discourse developed out of a shabad and complete in itself has thus been
introduced as a sub-sākhī into an earlier cluster of sākhīs concerning
Bābur.

The part played by the imagination of the narrator becomes even clearer
when this Bābur anecdote is compared with the *Purātan* version of Bābā
Nānak's visit to Mecca.[4] In this composite sākhī the same shabad appears
within a different discourse, this time with a Mecca pilgrim serving as
interlocutor. Evidently the bhang-consuming interlocutor had to be a
Muslim. The *Colebrooke* narrator (to whom the Mecca version can be
traced) chose a *hājī* whereas the unknown narrator followed by the *B40*
and *Ādi Sākhīs* compilers decided that Bābur would be an appropriate
choice.[5] The *Hāfizābād* compiler, with access to both sources, includes
both discourses.[6]

These procedures will be further analysed when discussing the evolution
of individual sākhīs. Two further points should, however, be noted
before proceeding to the fourth important constituent of the janam-sākhīs.
The first is that the processes indicated above should not be interpreted as
explicitly conscious procedures and certainly not as examples of deliberate
fabrication. Such an assumption would imply a variety of understanding
which the janam-sākhī narrators did not possess and criteria which they
could never have used. The point has already been made with the works of
Bhāī Gurdās, but it is of sufficient importance to warrant repetition. The
approach of the janam-sākhī narrators was not that of historians. Their
primary concern was with a single belief, namely belief in the divine
mission of Bābā Nānak. This was for them the essential truth. The
variety and nature of the material which they employed was of secondary
importance. No question of deceit would normally be involved in the use

[1] *AG*, p. 721.   [2] *B40*, f. 71a.   [3] Ibid.   [4] *Pur JS*, p. 98.
[5] Photozincograph Facsimile (Dehrā Dūn, 1885), pp. 388–9. *AS*, p. 55.
[6] M. A. Macauliffe (ed.), *Janam Sākhī Bābe Nānak Jī kī*, (Rāwalpiṇḍī, 1885), pp. 165, 250.

of 'unhistorical' material. It was the basic myth which demanded their faithful allegiance and with rare exceptions their allegiance was unswerving.

The second point to be noted at this stage is that although there are many sākhīs and sub-sākhīs which have been developed out of the Gurū's compositions their number is not nearly as substantial as first appearances might suggest. A cursory reading of almost any janam-sākhī will reveal numerous quotations from the works of Nānak, most of them presented as integral parts of the sākhīs in which they occur. Only a small minority of the large total have actually participated in the development of their contextual sākhīs. The large majority are subsequent additions to evolved sākhīs. Although they may still be regarded as constituents of the janam-sākhīs they are constituents in a much more superficial sense than works which have actually served to generate sākhīs.

Most extracts from the works of Nānak have been added because their terminology, content, or some particular reference seems to accord with the theme of an available sākhī. A transparent example is provided at the conclusion of the *B40* version of the sākhī 'Bābā Nānak's Visit to the Pilgrimage-centres'. The *Ādi Sākhīs* analogue terminates the sākhī at the point where Bābā Nānak's 'first disciples' give away all their possessions in order to live as *bairāgis*.

Having given them his blessing he went on his way.[1]

The *B40* compiler has at this point responded to the ever-insistent impulse to expand.

Having given them his blessing he went on his way singing an *aṣṭapadī* in the measure *Tilaṅg* rāga.
Wondrous is the Kingdom of Poverty,
The domain wherein there are no pretensions to greatness.[2]

Whereas in this example it is the theme of the shabad which has prompted the addition, elsewhere a single brief reference has been sufficient to suggest a scriptural supplement. An example is provided by the anecdote entitled 'The Monster's Cauldron'. Once again it is the *Ādi Sākhīs* analogue which provides the earlier text and it is a text which completely lacks scriptural quotation.[3] In the *B40* and other versions, however, a shabad by Gurū Arjan has been added in the mistaken belief that it is by Gurū Nānak.[4] The sākhī describes how when the monster sought to boil Bābā Nānak in a cauldron the oil refused to heat.[5] The shabad by Gurū Arjan includes the line:

The seething cauldron has lost its heat, for the Gurū has applied to it the cooling Name.

Although it is clear that Gurū Arjan was using the cauldron as an image for the troubled human heart, the similarity in terminology was evidently

[1] *AS*, p. 26.   [2] *B40*, f. 81a. The shabad is apocryphal.   [3] *AS*, p. 28.
[4] *Mārū Mahalā* 5, 14, *AG*, p. 1002.   [5] *B40*, f 40a–b. *Pur JS*, pp. 81–2.

too strong to be resisted and the shabad was accordingly added to the sākhī.[1]

The introduction of compositions by later Gurūs is a common inconsistency. Another is the manner in which different narrators interpolate the same shabad or shalok at different places. Many of the suggestive themes and references which have prompted interpolation can find congenial locations in more than one sākhī. An example is *Mārū* 6 in which Gurū Nānak describes himself as a slave (*lālā*).[2] His meaning can only be 'a slave of God', but this is not explicitly stated and two narrators have independently interpreted it in a literal sense. In the *B40* janam-sākhī it has been appended without further comment to a sākhī concerning a child who was to be sold into slavery by his parents.[3] The *Purātan* janam-sākhīs, in contrast, have introduced it into the sākhī describing the sack of Saidpur at the point where Bābā Nānak is said to have been committed to the Saidpur jail. In this latter instance a brief sub-sākhī has been developed from the shabad.[4]

Another example is provided by the shabad *Basant Hiṇḍol* 1, where the prompting issues from the fifth and sixth stanzas.

> And now the Primal One is called Allāh and it is the writ of the sheikhs which runs in Hindustān.[5]

One narrator, whose version was subsequently followed by the *Ādi Sākhīs, B40,* and *Miharbān* janam-sākhīs, somewhat inappropriately chose the Mecca visit as a suitable point to insert the shabad.[6] For him the reference to Muslims was sufficient. It was a more alert *Bālā* narrator who appreciated the distinctively Indian context of Nānak's comments and who was thus able to select a more suitable setting. The sākhī which he chose was a discourse between Bābā Nānak and a Muslim named Sheikh Mālo Takhān.[7] In this latter instance it is possible that the shabad may have been responsible for the development of the discourse. The same question arises in the case of a shalok from *Vār Āsā* which is said to have been addressed to a wealthy misanthrope named Bhāgo. In one tradition this Bhāgo appears as a resident of Saidpur in the celebrated story of Lālo the Carpenter;[8] and in the other as a chaudharī of Lahore.[9] Whereas the latter appears to be a direct development from the shalok the former is more doubtful.

It is thus evident that a majority of the scriptural quotations included in the janam-sākhīs are interpolations. Amongst those which appear as later supplements rather than original components some have been

[1] The interpretation suggested in *GNSR*, p. 79, is incorrect. The sākhī cannot have evolved out of the shabad.

[2] *AG*, p. 991.   [3] *B40*, f. 50a.

[4] *Pur JS*, p. 60. For an example of two complete sākhīs developed in this manner see below, pp. 128–9.

[5] *AG*, pp. 1190–1.

[6] *B40*, f. 134a–b. *AS*, pp. 43–4. *Mih JS* 1.453–7.   [7] *Bālā JS*, p. 339.

[8] *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 75–6. In this tradition Bhāgo is said to be a Khatrī and a karorī.

[9] *Mih JS* 11.385–6. The Bhāgo of the *Miharbān* tradition is said to be a Khahirā Jaṭ and to have been accompanied by a Dilāvarī Khatrī named Gaṅgū. The shalok is *Vār Āsā* 17:1, *AG*, p. 472.

introduced for pedagogical reasons, and a few for motives which are no longer evident. Pedagogical intentions are a prominent feature of the *Miharbān* tradition, particularly in the second and third sections of the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*. In a sense, of course, all additions drawn from the works of Gurū Nānak are intended to serve this function. All have been introduced to strengthen the soteriological thrust of the janam-sākhīs. Because they represent subsequent additions to earlier traditions they are also of interest as a means of distinguishing later versions from their earlier sources.

An anecdote which illustrates most of the features associated with the use of scriptural quotations in the janam-sākhīs is 'Bābā Nānak's Discourse with the Physician'.[1] The anecdote represents, in the first place, a sākhī which has been developed out of a composition by Gurū Nānak, aided by a shalok of Gurū Angad and two apocryphal shaloks. The composition by Gurū Nānak is also a shalok:

> They called a physician to practise his art, to seize my wrist and feel my pulse.
> The ignorant physician was unaware that the pain is in my heart![2]

The other three couplets all express a similar message and there can be no doubt that the genesis of the sākhī is to be found in one or more of the four. In its original form the sākhī must have consisted of a brief introduction, at least one of the four shaloks, and the physician's concluding declaration.

The second feature illustrated by this sākhī is the subsequent addition of scriptural quotations which seem to accord with its theme. Having emerged as a brief, coherent anecdote the sākhī was taken up by two separate traditions. During transmission within one of these traditions it was expanded by the addition of Gurū Nānak's *Malār 7*, a shabad which seemed eminently suited to its theme. *Malār 7* begins:

> Bring no medicine, O ignorant physician.
> It is this heart of mine which suffers, not my body.
> Such medicine is worthless, foolish physician.[3]

Meanwhile a narrator within the other tradition had made a different choice. Instead of *Malār 7* he had selected *Malār 8* as a suitable addition. This he did for precisely the same reason. *Malār 8* begins:

> Bring no medicine, O ignorant physician,
> For it is my heart which suffers torment.[4]

---

[1] *B40*, between ff. 14b and 19a. The *B40* text of this sākhī is missing, but has been reconstructed with the help of the manuscript *LDP 194*. See *B40(Eng)*, introduction, pp. 28–31.

[2] *Vār Malār* 3:1, *AG*, p. 1279. *B40(Eng)*, p. 17.

[3] Photozincograph Facsimile (Dehrā Dūn, 1885), p. 35. In the Ādi Granth version this refrain follows the first stanza, and its second line reads:

> Pain lingers, agony still racks my body.
> *AG*, p. 1256.

The janam-sākhī tradition into which this addition was introduced has been designated *Narrative Ia*. See below, pp. 185–7.

[4] *B40*, between ff. 14b and 19a. *AG*, pp. 1256–7. The janam-sākhī tradition which incorporates this supplement is *Narrative Ib*. One compiler utilizing *Narrative Ib* sources quotes *Malār 7*, not *Malār 8*. *AS*, p. 13. *Malār 8* is, however, confined to *Narrative Ib* janam-sākhīs and clearly represents an addition made within that tradition.

Both of these shabads were added because of their evident affinities with the subject of the anecdote.

A third feature appears only in the first of the two traditions. A narrator within this tradition later appended the shabad *Gaurī* 17.[1] This he did for reasons which are difficult to understand. The theme of the hymn bears no obvious resemblance to that of the sākhī. Moreover the addition has been made at the conclusion of the sākhī, following the physician's final pronouncement. Unlike *Malār* 7 it has not been integrated into the narrative.

A fourth feature, already implied by the second and third, emerges clearly from a comparison of the various versions of the Physician sākhī. This is the manner in which the sākhī has progressively expanded with successive versions. Although no text of the original form exists, its presence in the earliest oral tradition may be deduced from the differences distinguishing the two recorded traditions. The earliest of the recorded texts is represented by *LDP 194*[2] and the reconstructed *B40* sākhī. This corresponds to the second of the traditions noted above. The first tradition emerges, in a much later form, in the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*.[3] Both traditions united in the composite *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*.[4]

The Physician sākhī provides a preliminary illustration of the manner in which the scriptural constituent has been utilized by janam-sākhī narrators. Other examples of greater complexity will be discussed in the section dealing with the evolution of selected individual sākhīs.

4. ASCETIC IDEALS

The last of the major constituents is of a markedly different nature from the remainder. It derives not from earlier compositions, whether current anecdotes or works of the Gurū, but from a prevailing attitude or ideology. This is the ancient and tenacious belief in the supreme merit of asceticism. In one sense this constituent can be regarded as an aspect of received tradition, for it was as a part of tradition in the wider sense that the ascetic ideal exerted its powerful pressure upon the janam-sākhī narrators. It could not, however, be classified as an aspect of the other major constituent noted above. The ascetic ideals which find expression in the janam-sākhīs are diametrically opposed to Gurū Nānak's own emphatically stated beliefs. Nānak himself maintained a moderate position, a disciplined worldliness which was opposed to laxity on the one hand and total renunciation on the other.[5]

It is a measure of the power exercised by the ascetic tradition that it could so effectively reassert itself against Nānak's explicit opposition. This

---

[1] Photozincograph Facsimile, pp. 36–8. *AG*, p. 156.

[2] Loc. cit., ff. 19a–21a.

[3] IOL MS Panj. B6, ff. 26b–29a. Photozincograph Facsimile, pp. 33–8.

[4] M. A. Macauliffe (ed.), *Janam Sākhī Bābe Nānak Jī kī* (Rāwalpiṇḍī, 1885), pp. 22–4. *Pur JS*, pp. 11–12.

[5] *GNSR*, p. 211.

is not to suggest that its resurgence affected all sections of the new community, nor that Nānak's own teachings were buried in an avalanche of restored traditions. On the contrary, the emphasis upon the old ideals seems to have been the work of a particular group within the community.[1] It was, however, an influential group and it could appeal to deeply rooted sympathies. Its strength is abundantly evident from the extent to which the ascetic ideal has affected many of the janam-sākhī narratives.

As with all janam-sākhī constituents the ascetic tradition mingles with other elements. Sometimes it is the dominant element, sometimes it plays a subordinate though integrated role, and sometimes it emerges in the form of an interpolation. An example of the third of these appears in the *Purātan* version of the sākhī variously entitled 'Bābā Nānak's Visit to Gujrāt' and 'Dūnī Chand's Flags'. This relates an anecdote concerning a wealthy man who flaunted his riches by means of a display of symbolic pennants.[2] According to the *B40* version (a narrative which seems to have been taken directly from oral sources) Bābā Nānak's response to the rich man's conversion is simply one of joy.[3] The *Purātan* janam-sākhīs add to this a statement which can only be interpreted as a commendation of the renunciant life.

'Give in God's name,' answered the Gurū. 'Feed ascetics (*atit*) and wandering holy men (*abhiāgat*) for it is in this manner that your wealth will be carried into the hereafter.'[4]

Whereas the first instruction accords with Gurū Nānak's own ideals the second does so only in a strictly qualified sense which would not be the meaning intended by the narrator. Normally the distinction would be completely overlooked by a janam-sākhī audience. In this manner traditional beliefs which had been modified or rejected by the Gurū were soon restored to the community of his followers.

An example of combination with other constituents is the 'Sack of Saidpur' sākhī. Two primary elements can be recognized in this instance. The first is an authentic incident, namely the Mughal invasions of the Pañjāb and specifically Bābur's attack on the town of Saidpur;[5] and the second is a group of four shabads by Gurū Nānak which refer in general terms to Bābur's invasions.[6] The ascetic ideal provides a third constituent, subordinate to the other two but nevertheless important and richly embroidered by later narrators. Bābur attacked Saidpur (so it is claimed) because the churlish inhabitants of the town had refused hospitality to Bābā Nānak and the group of faqīrs who were with him.[7] In the proto-anecdote the explanation was probably limited to disrespect for the Gurū. The later narrators, however, magnify the explanation into something much larger. It is not merely the Gurū who was insulted but faqīrs in

---

[1] Probably the Udāsī sādhūs. The ascetic ideal obviously commanded a considerable following within the group responsible for the *Miharbān* tradition. It continues to find expression today in the surviving Udāsī panth and amongst the sādhūs of the Nirmalā panth. Both groups maintain their links with the wider Sikh community. For the Udāsīs see above, p. 35 and *B40(Eng)*, p. 96.

[2] *B40*, ff. 189a–190a.   [3] *B40*, f. 189b.   [4] *Pur JS*, p. 71.
[5] *GNSR*, p. 138.   [6] Ibid., p. 135.   [7] *B40*, ff. 66b–68b.

general, and faqīrs are explicitly distinguished from householders.[1] Once again the departure from Nānak's own teachings becomes apparent.

In this instance the ascetic element is secondary. A sākhī in which it plays a primary role is the *Bālā* anecdote entitled *Kharā Saudā* or 'The Good Bargain'.[2] Bābā Nānak, having received twenty rupees from his father for a small commercial enterprise, gives the entire amount to a band of wandering sādhūs. Once again the pressure of the ascetic ideal, with its marked deference to total renunciation, is abundantly evident.

From a number of sākhīs included in the *Ādi Sākhīs* and the *B40 Janam-sākhī* (and descending from the former to the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*) it appears that a section of the Sikh community which subscribed to the ascetic ideal may once have produced its own distinctive janam-sākhī. In the *B40 Janam-sākhī* these sākhīs occur in two clusters (numbers 20–1 and 25–7).[3] There can be no doubt that these anecdotes have been taken from a single common source by the B40 and *Ādi Sākhīs* compilers.[4] In view of the consistent emphasis laid upon asceticism and renunciation in these clusters it seems reasonable to conclude that they must have originated (at least in their extant form) within an ascetically inclined segment of the community. These sākhīs represent Bābā Nānak as a performer of austerities[5] and as one who sought total withdrawal from the world.[6] It is no accident that Gorakhnāth, with his immense reputation for ascetic accomplishments, should be accorded a particular respect within this group of sākhīs.

Received tradition and the works of Gurū Nānak provide the two most important constituents of the janam-sākhīs. A continuing ascetic ideal accounts for a third, and a fourth is occasionally supplied by memories of authentic incidents. A single constituent is rarely found in complete isolation. Most sākhīs are products of a blending of constituents, and in many instances the mingling process has reached a considerable degree of complexity. Whereas in all cases the choice of elements has been largely determined by the primary purpose of the janam-sākhī narrators, the form and content of their actual expression has been moulded by the cultural context within which the janam-sākhīs evolved. The impact of Gurū Nānak upon certain areas of sixteenth-century Pañjāb society produced a conviction concerning the meaning of his life and teachings. To give this belief concrete and convincing expression there soon accumulated a body of tradition, most of it consisting of anecdote and discourse. Although this tradition inevitably drew much of its material from earlier traditions it nevertheless possessed a freshness and a novelty of its own. This it acquired by reason of the new focus for the tradition and also as a result of the function it served in giving expression to the distinctive needs of the new community.

[1] *B40*, f. 68b.   [2] *Bālā JS*, pp. 16–22. *GNSR*, p. 83. See also *SLTGN(Eng)*, p. 65.
[3] *B40*, ff. 76a–82a, 100a–110a. See below, p. 203.
[4] The source is the *Q2* manuscript. It appears that the *Q2* compiler may have used a particular source for these sākhīs. See below, p. 206.
[5] *B40*, ff. 76a, 102b–103a, 103b.   [6] *B40*, f. 106b.

7

JANAM-SĀKHĪ FORMS

THE intention of the janam-sākhī narrators was to give expression to their interpretations of the life and teachings of Gurū Nānak. For this purpose they required appropriate forms. If the purpose was to be fulfilled it was essential that the chosen forms should provide coherent statements of their interpretations in a manner agreeable to their intended audiences, and it was inevitable that this requirement should be answered by means of extensive borrowing from contemporary models. The janam-sākhī narrators were not conscious artists, much less deliberate innovators. It was the message which concerned them and it was entirely natural that they should unconsciously adapt existing forms in order to give it expression. Narrative patterns which well suited their purpose were already abundantly familiar to their audiences. These provided the narrators with their models.

The principal exemplar followed by the janam-sākhī narrators was the *tazkira* of Sūfī hagiography. The Sūfī *tazkiras* were collections of biographical anecdotes which related the wondrous deeds of celebrated pīrs. This was precisely the pattern which the janam-sākhī narrators required and they slipped into it with complete ease. In some cases their debt to Sūfī tradition extended to exact borrowings of complete anecdotes.[1] Even the distinctively Indian elements in the janam-sākhī style can, in some measure, be associated with the Sūfī example, for Sūfī hagiography within India had itself engaged in extensive borrowing of native forms.

It is, of course, possible to carry this self-evident theory of correspondence too far and to assume that *all* varieties of janam-sākhī forms should be attributed to Sūfī models. This is certainly not the case. The beginnings of the janam-sākhī traditions must be closely linked with Sūfī forms and the continuing anecdotal method retains that connection. There are, however, other forms to be found within the janam-sākhīs and here the relationship is that of similarity rather than correspondence. Janam-sākhī discourse and commentary are not the same as the Sūfī forms.

The impression which emerges from a comparison of janam-sākhī and Sūfī traditions is that of an early assumption of the standard narrative forms used by the Sūfīs, followed by an increasing divergence as the janam-sākhīs grow in age and quantity. The needs of the Sikh community were not identical with the interests of Sūfī hagiographers, and just as the initial correspondence was inevitable so too was the later divergence. Although this applied to actual content rather than form the latter was by

[1] The anecdote concerning Bābā Nānak's visit to Multān provides an example. See below, pp. 118–20

no means uninfluenced by the distinctive needs of the evolving community.

The principal forms used by janam-sākhī narrators and commentators have already been briefly summarized. They will now be analysed in greater detail.

1. *NARRATIVE ANECDOTES*

The narrative anecdote was the earliest of all janam-sākhī forms and has ever since remained dominant in all janam-sākhīs except that of the *Miharbān* tradition. This at once indicates a plain debt to the Sūfī models. It should, however, be added that even without the example of the *tazkira* the janam-sākhī narrators would still have employed an anecdotal style. The anecdote is unusually well suited to the needs of hagiography. It provides ample scope for an unending series of decisive actions, pointed epigrams, and evidences of divine approval. These are the obvious concerns of the janam-sākhī hagiographers and their extensive use of the anecdotal form is a predictable consequence.

Although most of the individual anecdotes are marked by a pithy brevity this feature has been somewhat obscured by the general tendency of narrators to group them into clusters. A particular person, place, or theme has commonly attracted more than one anecdote and clusters of this kind have frequently been recast as a single composite sākhī or as a brief series of consecutive sākhīs. The process is clearly illustrated by the later janam-sākhī treatments of several Mecca anecdotes, and by some of the sākhīs which describe encounters with Nāths.[1] Most of the longer narrative sākhīs are fashioned in this manner from a number of separate anecdotes, often with a considerable degree of skill. It is only occasionally that the specifically narrative portion of a single anecdote will run to several folios of a manuscript, and whenever this does occur it usually succeeds only in weakening the force of the anecdote's message. An unusually clumsy example is the *B40* sākhī entitled 'Bābā Nānak Enslaved in the Land of the Paṭhāns'.[2]

Cumbersome narrative structures are, however, rare. Single anecdotes which run to excessive length normally do so because scriptural quotations have been inserted. These interpolations also tend to weaken the impact of an anecdote, and although they have obviously been introduced to serve the primary purpose of the janam-sākhīs it may well be suspected that they frequently produced the opposite effect. Whereas a single shabad would be tolerable a series which interrupted an interesting narrative could defeat the narrator's purpose.

A clarification which is required at this point concerns the distinction which must be drawn between anecdote and sākhī. In its normal usage 'sākhī' designates no more than a chapter or section of a janam-sākhī. A sākhī may, and often does, contain only one anecdote, but this should not imply an identity of meaning. The limitation of each sākhī to a single

[1] See below, examples 7 and 8, pp. 135-57.   [2] *B40*, ff. 163b-170b.

anecdote must have been a general feature of the earliest traditions, becoming progressively less common as the narratives diversify and the grouping of anecdotes advances. Whereas single-anecdote sākhīs dominate material drawn direct from oral tradition,[1] composite sākhīs containing more than one anecdote (or sub-sākhī) rapidly evolved within the recorded traditions. Moreover, these composite sākhīs frequently embodied distinctly different forms of anecdote and discourse. The term sākhī, in its strict sense, thus designates a convenient division. It is not itself a janam-sākhī prose form.

The narrative anecdotes of the janam-sākhīs may be subdivided into four categories. There are *moralistic anecdotes, chimeric fairy-tales, devotional legends,* and *aetiological legends.* All serve to express the same myth, but do so in distinctively different ways.

(a) *Moralistic anecdotes*

The *moralistic anecdote* serves, as its name so plainly indicates, to point a particular moral. This it may do either in a brief concluding statement by Bābā Nānak or, less commonly, by means of a parabolic action attributed to him. Brevity is vital if success is to be achieved and for this reason the moralistic anecdote is normally distinguished by succinct expression. The form is particularly prominent in the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs, a feature which indicates a special interest on the part of the principal *Colebrooke* compiler.[2] It is to this anonymous person that we owe the following five examples of highly effective moralistic anecdote.

The Inhospitable Village Unmolested and the Hospitable Village Dispersed

They departed from there and proceeding on their way they came to a village. They stopped there, but no one would give them shelter. Instead the inhabitants jeered at them. They moved on to the next town where they were warmly welcomed. Spending the night there they departed the next day. As they were leaving the Gurū declared, 'May this town be uprooted and its inhabitants scattered.'

'This is strange justice,' observed Mardānā. 'The place where we received no hospitality you left alone, and the town which welcomed us so warmly you have uprooted.'

'Mardānā,' replied the Gurū, 'the inhabitants of the first town would go to another and corrupt it. When the inhabitants of this town go to another they will bring it truth and salvation.'[3]

Sheikh Bajīd

On the road Bābā Nānak and Mardānā met Sheikh Bajīd Sayyid riding in a litter

---

[1] An example of this variety of material is supplied by the *B40* sākhīs 35–49 and 51. Loc. cit., ff. 154b–199a, 204a–205a. Even here there are instances of dual-anecdote sākhīs (e.g. 35, 43, 44, 49), although the two portions are rarely blended in the manner of the later composite sākhīs.

[2] The compiler of the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī* (the other major *Purātan* janam-sākhī) has evidently copied all his moralistic anecdotes from his *Colebrooke* source.

[3] *Pur JS,* p. 40. *GNSR,* pp. 41–2.

carried by six bearers. The Sheikh alighted beneath a tree and his bearers began to massage and fan him.

'Is there not one God?' asked Mardānā.

'God is indeed one, Mardānā,' replied Bābā Nānak.

'Then who created him, my Lord?' asked Mardānā. 'Who created the one who rides in a palanquin whilst these others are barefoot and their bodies naked? They bear him on their backs, whereas he reclines and is massaged.'

Bābā Nānak answered him, 'All who enter the world come naked from the womb. Joy and pain come in accordance with the deeds of one's previous existence.'

Mardānā prostrated himself.[1]

Sheikh Farīd and the Gold Coins

Bābā Nānak and Sheikh Farīd spent the night together in the jungle. A devout person happened to pass that way and seeing them he returned to his home. There he filled a bowl with milk and having dropped four gold coins into it he brought it back during the early hours of the morning. Sheikh Farīd took his share and left the Gurū his portion.

'Sheikh Farīd, stir this milk with your hand and see what is in it,' said Bābā Nānak. When Sheikh Farīd did so he discovered the four gold coins. The devout donor put down the bowl and departed. . . . Bābā Nānak and Sheikh Farīd also departed and when the donor returned he found the bowl sitting there. Picking it up he discovered that it was now made of gold and filled with gold coins. Then he began to lament, saying, 'They were true faqīrs. He who comes with an open heart finds true faith, whereas he who brings worldly things receives a worldly reward.' He picked up the bowl and returned home.[2]

Bābā Nānak explains the Destruction of Saidpur

One day Mardānā asked, 'Why have so many been slain when only one did wrong?'

'Go and sleep under that tree, Mardānā,' answered the Gurū. 'When you get up I shall give you an answer.'

And so Mardānā went and slept there. Now a drop of grease had fallen on his chest while he was eating and while he was sleeping it attracted ants. One ant happened to disturb the sleeping Mardānā who responded by wiping them all away with his hand.

'What have you done, Mardānā?' asked Bābā Nānak.

'All have died because one disturbed me,' exclaimed Mardānā.

Bābā Nānak laughed and said, 'Mardānā, thus does death come to many because of one.'[3]

A Pious Boy

One day the Gurū decreed that there should be communal singing (*kirtan*) during the last watch of the night. A boy seven years of age used to leave his house and come and stand behind the Gurū during the *kirtan*. After the *Āratī* had been sung he would depart. One day Bābā Nānak said, 'Detain the boy today.' After the boy had prostrated himself and was on his way out the other members of the congregation stopped him and brought him to the Gurū.

---

[1] *Pur JS*, pp. 25-6. *GNSR*, p. 39.   [2] *Pur JS*, pp. 43-4. *GNSR*, p. 42.

[3] *Pur JS*, p. 65. *GNSR*, p. 44.

Bābā Nānak addressed him, 'Boy, you who arise and come at such an hour, why do you come? This is the time of life for eating, playing and sleeping.'

'Sir,' replied the boy, 'one day my mother said to me, "Light the fire, son." I lit the fire and as I placed the wood on it the little sticks kindled first then later the bigger ones. I became afraid, thinking that like the firewood we who are small may have to depart first. We may perhaps reach adulthood—but then perhaps we may not. And so I decided that I should repeat the Gurū's name.'

Hearing this the congregation was struck with wonder. The Gurū was delighted and the boy fell at his feet.[1]

Of these five anecdotes only the last constitutes a separate and complete sākhī. The first has unaccountably been divided into two sākhīs, and the remainder have all been incorporated in composite sākhīs. Scriptural quotations have been added to all except the fourth. In the case of 'Sheikh Bajīd' the quotation (an apocryphal shalok) may have provided the actual genesis of the brief narrative.

Two anecdotes of the moralistic variety which have enjoyed a notable popularity within the Sikh community are the *Bālā* stories entitled respectively 'The Good Bargain' and 'Lālo and Bhāgo'.[2] The second of these, a relatively late development, provides perhaps the most striking of all parables within the range of the janam-sākhīs. Abbreviated versions of both anecdotes have been included in the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak*, and it is from the text of this latter collection that the following translations have been made.

The Good Bargain

Even after his marriage, however, Bābājī's spirit was still restless and Kālū, when he perceived this, was greatly disheartened. 'Whatever can we do to calm Nānak's restless spirit?' he asked himself. He tried another idea. 'Do some trading, son,' he said, and gave him a capital of twenty rupees, together with a servant, in order to procure some fine yarn. Bābājī set out to purchase the yarn. On the way he observed a large number of sādhūs sitting in a jungle, and tarrying in their company he conversed with them about God. Following this discourse Bābājī laid the twenty rupees before the sādhūs and returned home.

When he arrived Kālū said to him, 'Show us the merchandise which you have brought, son.'

'Father,' replied Bābājī, 'I have returned after striking a most profitable bargain!'

'He has returned after giving the money to faqīrs!' said the servant.

When he heard this Kālū was greatly disheartened and lost his temper. Rāi Bulār, the landlord, hearing what had happened summoned Kālū and said, 'Do not trouble Nānak. He is the image of God.' And so Kālū pardoned him.[3]

Lālo and Bhāgo

Next he visited the house of Lālo where he remained for some days. Meanwhile news of his arrival spread throughout that area. It so happened that at that time a certain Khatrī was holding a *yagya*. To secure blessings for his deceased forbears

[1] *Pur JS*, pp. 72–3. *GNSR*, pp. 45–6.   [2] *Bālā JS*, pp. 16–22, 80–90.
[3] *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 65–6. *GNSR*, p. 83.

he had ordered one hundred thousand cows for presentation to Brāhmaṇs and had invited one hundred thousand Brāhmaṇs to the feast. Formerly the name of the village in which Lālo lived had been Saidpur Sarohā. Because of a sin committed by some Paṭhāns Bābājī had invoked a curse upon it and the Emperor Bābur had massacred its inhabitants. Subsequently the name was changed to Eminābād in accordance with Bābājī's command, and having bestowed this new name upon it he had caused the devastated village to be reoccupied.

This foolish Khatrī karoṛī was at that time holding a *yagya* and when he heard of Bābājī's arrival he sent a man to the house of Lālo the carpenter to say that Nānak should dine at his house. Bābājī, however, refused the invitation and so when the Brāhmaṇs had taken their seats for the feast the karoṛī came to Bābājī and with insistent requests managed to persuade him to come to his own house. Setting a tray of food before him he said, 'How can an exalted sādhū such as you dine at the house of a mere carpenter? Tell me please why you decline to eat with Brāhmaṇs and Khatrīs?'

'In Lālo's house,' replied Bābājī, 'there lies my vegetable cake. Bring it here.' The vegetable cake was brought and Bābājī took it in one hand. In the other hand he took one of the karoṛī's fried pastries (*pūrī*) and with both hands he squeezed the two articles. From the karoṛī's rich food there oozed blood and from Lālo's humble vegetable cake there flowed milk! Bābājī then recited a shalok.

ślok mahalā 1

If a thief burgles a house, and having robbed it offers the proceeds as an oblation for his departed forbears,
The stolen property will be recognised in the other world and your forefathers will be accused of theft.
The broker's hand will be cut off, for thus is divine retribution administered.
Nānak, only that which is given from honest earnings can be received in the other world.

Then Bābājī said, 'Close your eyes, brother karoṛī, and witness a spectacle.' And what should he see but his own forefathers being beaten with shoes by the forefathers of those whose cows he had taken. Awestruck he fell at Bābājī's feet, saying 'O Master, let me become your disciple. You are the saviour of the fallen. Let the purpose of my *yagya* be fulfilled.' Bābājī took mercy upon him and said, 'Pay everyone whose cows you have taken and when you have satisfied them make your offering to the Brāhmaṇs.' The karoṛī did as he was instructed and Bābājī, having brought the karoṛī's *yagya* to fulfilment, went on his way.[1]

Another anecdote of this kind which appears in both collections attributes its moral to Gurū Aṅgad:

[1] *SLTGN(Eng)*, p. 75. In the *Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā* version of the anecdote the Khatrī's name is given as Gurasū. *GNM*, pp. 293–4. This anecdote is also of interest as an example of a sākhī which owes a primary element to a reference in one of Nānak's shabads. The name 'Lālo' evidently derives from *Tilaṅg* 5 (*AG*, p. 722). See *GNSR*, pp. 86–7. Popular piety still identifies a house in Eminābād with the actual residence of Lālo. This must be a later building. The town which existed during the lifetime of Gurū Nānak (it was at that time called Saidpur) was razed either by Sher Shāh Sūrī or earlier by Bābur. The Eminābād which eventually replaced it was not constructed until the reign of Akbar and was built at a distance of one-and-a-half miles from the former site. *Gazetteer of the Gujranwala District 1893–94* (Lahore, 1895), p. 173. For the question of who actually destroyed Saidpur see below, pp. 93–4. See also *B40(Eng)*, pp. 69–70.

Absolute Loyalty

One night Bābājī asked Bābā Buḍhā, 'How much of the night remains, Buḍhā?'
'A watch and a quarter, my Lord,' replied Buḍhā.
'How do you know?' asked Bābājī.
'We who are rural folk can tell by observing the stars,' answered Buḍhā.
Bābājī then asked Gurū Aṅgad. 'How much of the night remains, my man?'
'My Lord,' he replied, 'You know full well that whether it is night or whether
it is day I am yours. Night or day, it makes no difference.'
Hearing this response Bābājī was greatly pleased.[1]

To these examples many more could be added, particularly from the
Purātan janam-sākhīs. Others included by the *Colebrooke* compiler are
'The Death of the Trader's Infant Son', 'A Watchman receives Royal
Authority', and 'The Coal and the Thorn'.[2] The *B40* compiler was
evidently less attracted by the moralistic approach, but does find space for
two classic anecdotes of this kind, 'The Watering of the Fields'[3] and
'The Rich Man's Pennants'.[4]

The stories narrated in these anecdotes and the morals which they point
are in every case related directly to the purpose of the janam-sākhīs.
Moralistic anecdotes serve to express the wisdom of their principal
participant, and the credit implied in the janam-sākhī specimens of this
form is, of course, attached specifically to Bābā Nānak. In this manner the
form provides its own distinctive and attractive contribution to the message
of the janam-sākhīs.

(b) *Chimeric fairy-tales*

The *chimeric fairy-tale* is distinguished from other fairy-stories and
legends by the presence of such figures of fantasy as magicians, ogres, and
beasts endowed with human faculties.[5] Characters of this kind are to be
found in all the janam-sākhīs, with a particular fondness for them evident
in those of the *Bālā* tradition. Although the earlier *Miharbān* commentators
were evidently reluctant to include the more grotesque variety a late
redactor of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* has interpolated a series of un-
usually bizarre figures.[6] Chimeric fairy-tales are accordingly a significant
feature of all extant janam-sākhīs.

Amongst the more popular instances of this form two which have
enjoyed a particular prominence are 'The Monster's Cauldron' and 'The
Country Ruled by Women'. The first of these relates how Bābā Nānak,
having lost his way in a wilderness, was seized by a *rākaś* (demon or

---

[1] *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 80–1. The anecdote appears in *Bālā* manuscripts, but not in the printed
Bālā JS.
[2] *Pur JS*, pp. 28–32. *GNSR*, p. 19. All three now include shabads. The first appears to have
developed out of the shabad which it incorporates.
[3] *B40*, ff. 76b–79a.
[4] *B40*, ff. 189a–190a. See below pp. 124–5. The Sajjaṇ/Bholā story is also a moralistic anecdote.
See below pp. 122–4.
[5] Aage Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, vol. i (Copenhagen, 1948), p. 240.
[6] *Mih JS* I.206–31. *GNSR*, pp. 57–8.

monster). The monster's intention was to boil Nānak in a cauldron of oil, a plan which was frustrated when the Gurū dipped his finger in the oil. It immediately became cool and the monster, confounded by this miracle, became a disciple. This is the substance of the narrative as it appears in the *B40* version.[1] The *Ādi Sākhīs* account omits the reference to the wilderness, but actually places Bābā Nānak in the cauldron and describes in rather more detail the unsuccessful attempt to heat it.[2] In the interpolated *Miharbān* version it is Mardānā who is put in the cauldron.[3] The *Purātan* narrator makes Bābā Nānak a voluntary candidate for stewing and adds that the incident took place 'on an island in the ocean, in foreign parts'.[4] In a considerably expanded version the standard *Bālā* account adds that the monster's name was Kauḍā.[5]

The figure variously described in this manner is plainly of the chimeric variety. Although in modern usage this word can be rendered 'cannibal' or 'savage', and although the *rākaś* encountered by Bābā Nānak certainly numbered cannibalism amongst his qualifications, it is evident that the janam-sākhī narrators envisaged a creature of more than mere human proportions. This is clearly brought out in the illustration which accompanies the *B40* version[6] and to this day Kauḍā the Rākaś provides bazaar lithographers with their choicest opportunity for the exercise of ingenious fantasy. The figure was not, of course, an invention of the janam-sākhī narrators. Earlier tradition offered an abundance of incidents involving *rākaś* (*rākṣasa*). Rāvaṇ of Laṅkā is the obvious example.

The anecdote entitled 'The Country Ruled by Women' has already been noted as an example of a direct borrowing from received tradition.[7] In this episode interest is focused upon a group of female magicians who turn Mardānā into a sheep by means of an enchanted thread.[8] These are the famous women of *strī deś*, a popular theme in earlier legend.[9]

Other examples of the chimeric fairy-tale may be found in all janam-sākhīs. Another popular one, included in all major versions, is the encounter with Kaliyug.[10] Elsewhere in the *B40* janam-sākhī Bābā Nānak is confronted by a demon arsonist 'as high as the heavens' who made a monthly habit of setting fire to the houses in a particular area.[11] The *Purātan* janam-sākhīs relate anecdotes concerning a city of ants, a talking wolf, and the legendary Khwājā Khizar.[12] Although most of these are missing from the *Bālā* narrative other representatives of the same form more than compensate for their absence. The *Bālā* contribution includes a talking fish, seventy miles long and ten miles wide, which carries Bābā

---

[1] *B40*, f. 40a–b.   [2] *AS*, p. 28.   [3] *Mih JS* I.231.   [4] *Pur JS*, pp. 81–2.

[5] *kauḍā*, lit. a fire lit specifically for heating purposes. *Bālā JS*, p. 125. The name Kauḍā also appears in the heading attached to the printed *Purātan* version. *Pur JS*, p. 81. This heading, like all others in the *Pur JS*, is an addition made by the editor of the published text. Such headings do not appear in the manuscripts.

[6] *B40*, f. 39b. Cf. also *Bālā JS*, p. 125.   [7] See above, p. 70.

[8] *B40*, ff. 83a–85b. *AS*, pp. 26–8. *Pur JS*, pp. 33–7. *Bālā JS*, pp. 102–8.

[9] *GNSR*, p. 112.   [10] *B40*, ff. 44a–47a. *AS*, pp. 28–31. *Pur JS*, pp. 37–8.

[11] *B40*, ff. 175a–176b.

[12] *Pur JS*, pp. 78–9, 70–1, 38–40. *GNSR*, pp. 41, 45, 47. The 'City of Insects' anecdote may perhaps owe its origin to the Quranic story of Solomon and the Valley of Ants (*sūrah* 27).

Nānak across the sea;[1] an encounter with Kāl (Death); a visit to the city of
Demon Devalūt, ruler over 1,700,000 gods, who like Kauḍā the Rākaś is
fond of boiling people in oil; and a meeting with some ape-men.[2]

As in the case of the moralistic anecdotes all of these chimeric fairy-
tales are used to supplement the janam-sākhī myth. It is true that figures
such as Kauḍā the Rākaś and Demon Devalūt appeal enormously to the
popular imagination and that this feature alone might justify their inclu-
sion. This, however, is not their primary significance. They have been
introduced into the janam-sākhī narratives not merely to entertain but
more particularly to provide further illustrations of the authority of Bābā
Nānak. Although the women of strī deś wield magical powers of terrifying
potency these powers are ineffective against Bābā Nānak. Only one who
has received a divine commission could possibly withstand such assaults.
Kauḍā, Devalūt, Kaliyug, and all the rest recognize the presence of
divinity and fall at his feet. If they who hear these stories make the same
submission they too shall find salvation. Thus does the chimeric fairy-tale,
like all other forms, serve the basic purpose of the janam-sākhī narrators.

(c) *Devotional legends*

The basic purpose of the janam-sākhīs is expressed with even greater
directness in the third variety of anecdote. The *devotional legend* seeks to
convince or confirm by means of explicit reference to the power possessed
by the Gurū, to the quality of his devotion, or to intervention by God on
his behalf. This category may be further subdivided as follows:

(i) *Wonder-stories* The primary feature of the *wonder-story* is, in this
context, the signification of divine status by means of miraculous deeds or
supernatural phenomena. The essential feature of the story is not the
miracle itself but rather the conclusion towards which the miracle points.
Miracles can be performed only by the person chosen and endowed by
God. Bābā Nānak worked miracles and God worked them on his behalf.
Here surely is the seal of his divinity. The fact that Gurū Nānak himself
laid no such claims in his works is of no importance. For the later believer
miraculous events were both a staple tradition and a necessary proof.
Their introduction into the janam-sākhīs was inevitable.

As one might expect, wonder-stories associated with the Gurū's
childhood enjoy a considerable popularity. No janam-sākhī which deals
with this period lacks 'The Ruined Crop Restored' or 'The Tree's
Stationary Shadow',[3] both of them tales of how divine approval was
signified by the suspension of natural laws. The child Nānak's discourses
with the paṇḍit and the mullah[4] provide an interesting parallel to the child
Jesus in the Temple; and the later *Bālā* introduction of a protective cobra
illustrates a direct borrowing from earlier tradition.[5] Tales of dangers

---

[1] Cf. the *Mahābhārata, Mārkandeya-samāsyā parva (vana parva* CLXXXVI).
[2] *Bālā JS*, pp. 138, 141, 162–8, 168–9.   [3] *B40*, ff. 7a–9b.
[4] *B40*, ff. 2b–5b. *Pur JS*, pp. 1–6. *Mih JS* I.11–20.   [5] *Bālā JS*, p. 14.

survived are curiously absent, but not the predictable emphasis upon the degeneracy of the period into which Bābā Nānak was born.[1] The deeper the darkness the brighter the rising sun will appear to shine. This feature still survives in modern accounts of the life of the Gurū.

(ii) *Apologetic anecdotes* Some janam-sākhī anecdotes have a patently apologetic purpose, one which at times assumes a distinctly polemical character. In its positive form the *apologetic anecdote* seeks to uphold the claims made on the Gurū's behalf by means of explicit declarations, usually issuing direct from the mouth of God. Most janam-sākhī compilers regarded at least one such declaration as essential and an interview with God is accordingly a standard feature of almost all collections.[2]

In its negative form the apologetic anecdote involves encounters with Muslims and Hindus, particularly with the variety who commanded influence during the janam-sākhī period. Those whose distinctive beliefs or customs were understood to be in radical conflict with the teachings of Gurū Nānak also received attention. Bigoted qāzīs[3] and punctilious Brāhmaṇs[4] provided obvious targets. They were not, however, the most suitable interlocutors. Because they were so very obvious the anecdotes which relate encounters with such figures are usually less effective than those which concern a more sympathetic kind of Hindu or Muslim. A pīr convinced served the janam-sākhī purpose better than a qāzī humiliated.

(iii) *Sectarian narratives* In some instances the apologetic expressed by a particular anecdote concerns not the wider Sikh community but rather the distinctive beliefs of some segment of it. The result is the *sectarian anecdote*. Sākhīs which in the *B40*, *Ādi Sākhīs*, and *Miharbān* collections give expression to an ascetic ideal may be classified in this manner,[5] and likewise the Hindālī material which is to be found in manuscript versions of the *Bālā* tradition.[6]

(d) *Aetiological legends*

Although the *aetiological legend* is rare in the janam-sākhīs the few examples which do appear are of sufficient interest to warrant separate notice. They include popular etymologies, local legends, and at least one explanation of a natural phenomenon.

The earliest example of an aetiological legend appears to be the explana-.tion offered by the janam-sākhīs for the second Gurū's change of name from Lahaṇā to Aṅgad. This, it is claimed, took place in accordance with a declaration attributed to Gorakhnāth: 'Nānak, he who is born from your body (*aṅg*) will be your Gurū.'[7] The classification of this anecdote as an

---

[1] *BG* I:17, 22.   [2] *B40* sākhī 30, ff. 123b–126b, is an example.
[3] *B40*, ff. 19b–24b.   [4] *Pur JS*, p. 72. *GNSR*, p. 45.   [5] See above, pp. 80–81.
[6] See above, p. 17.
[7] *Pur JS*, p. 108. *B40* accepts the same etymology. *B40*, ff. 93a, 95a.

aetiological legend does not, of course, mean that the janam-sākhīs are necessarily mistaken in claiming that Gurū Aṅgad was originally called Lahaṇā. It is the etymological connection with Gorakhnāth which constitutes the legend.

Another popular etymology attributes the name of the Chinese city of Nanking to a supposed visit by Nānak. This legend, which emerged only very recently and which is still in the process of gaining currency, demonstrates that even today the travel narratives can still be expanded. Whereas the extant janam-sākhīs take Nānak only as far as the Himālayas (and Mount Sumeru), some modern hagiographers are evidently prepared, on the basis of this fanciful etymology, to extend his northern itinerary as far as eastern China.[1]

Two local legends of the aetiological variety are to be found in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century traditions. The earlier of the two is an obscure story recorded in the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak* which attributes a well in Khaḍūr village to the divination of the Gurū.[2] The second example is both unusually late and tremendously popular. This is the story of *Pañjā Sāhib*, an anecdote set in the village of Hasan Abdāl (Attock District). The anecdote relates how Bābā Nānak once came to the village and feeling thirsty he dispatched his companion Mardānā to bring water. The only available spring happened to be situated on the crest of a nearby hill, in the keeping of a Muslim dervish named Bāwā Valī Qandhārī. Jealous of the Gurū's fame Valī Qandhārī refused to permit access to the water, suggesting that if the Gurū were equal to his reputation he would provide his own spring. Bābā Nānak accepted the challenge and opened a fresh spring at the foot of the hill, whereupon the spring on the crest dried up. The enraged Valī Qandhārī then sent an avenging boulder hurtling down towards the Gurū who stopped it merely by raising his hand. The imprint of his hand upon the rock can (so it is claimed) be seen to this day, and for this reason the place is known as *Pañjā Sāhib*, or the Holy Palm.

This 'hand-mark' has added a second feature to a site which had already inspired a series of aetiological legends. The earlier legends, developed within Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim tradition, all concerned the springs, which, as Jahāṅgīr was later to note, were unusually limpid.[3] Although in the Sikh tradition the springs still play an important role, primary attention has been transferred to the 'hand-mark'.

The legend of *Pañjā Sāhib* is of particular interest not merely for its aetiological characteristics, but for its relative lateness. None of the seventeenth- or eighteenth-century janam-sākhīs refers to it, nor does.

---

[1] Surindar Singh Kohlī, *Travels of Guru Nanak* (Chaṇḍīgaṛh, 1969), pp. 57, 127. The same writer suggests that Nānak must have travelled by sea. He claims that the Gurū visited the Malay Peninsula and Singapore, and surmises that he must also have extended his travels to include the archipelago, perhaps also the Philippines and Japan. Ibid., pp. 55–7.

[2] *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 83–4.

[3] *The Tūzuk-i-Jahāṅgīrī, or Memoirs of Jahāṅgīr*, trans. A. Rogers, ed. H. Beveridge (London, 1909), p. 100. *ASI* ii.135–9.

Jahāṅgīr indicate any awareness of its existence.[1] Moorcroft and Trebeck, who passed through Hasan Abdāl in 1823, describe the story as 'the probable invention of a very recent date' and imply that it can be traced to the occasion of Rañjīt Siṅgh's occupation of the town in 1818.[2] In 1866 J. G. Delmerick, while visiting the town, was given an explanation which supported their opinion. Having related the standard tradition concerning the boulder and the 'hand-mark', he continues:

But there are many people still living in the town who openly deny the truth of this story. They remember to have grazed their buffalos on the site of the tank and temple. They state that one Kaman, a mason, for his own amusement cut out on a stone the impression of a hand, and that on one occasion during the reign of Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs having resolved to punish the inhabitants of the place for some marauding act, they all ran away, except one Naju, a *faqir*, to the Gandgarh Mountain. Naju was caught, but he declared that he was one of Baba Nanak's *faqirs*. He was asked how he came to know Baba Nanak, whereupon he showed the handiwork of Kaman, and invented the tale. The Sikhs believed him and set up the stone. Nanda, a very old man, and a Hindu, who is, moreover, a highly respectable resident of the town, admits that before Ranjit Singh's time there was no shrine or place for Hindu worship at Hasan Abdal.[3]

The 'hand-mark' witnessed by these early travellers was not an incision cut into the rock, but a representation projecting in relief. Hugel described it as a bas-relief[4] and the 1893–4 edition of the *Gazetteer of the Rawalpindi District* as 'a rude representation of a hand in relief'.[5] The same feature was again noted by G. B. Scott in 1930.[6] It was evidently during the course of 1940 that the original representation in relief was eventually replaced by a crude intaglio cut *into* the rock. The edges which were at first sharp have now been worn smooth.[7]

Two more aetiological legends offer points of particular interest. The janam-sākhīs explain the destruction of Saidpur by Bābur as divine punishment wreaked upon the town for its callous disregard of the Gurū and his company of faqīrs. The point of interest raised by this aspect of the Saidpur story is that it may well supply a historical fact which would otherwise be unknown. What was already known was that Saidpur was

---

[1] Valī Qandhārī does appear in the early *Bālā* tradition, but not in the context of the Pañjā Sāhib anecdote. *Bālā JS*, pp. 300–3.

[2] Wm. Moorcroft and Geo. Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces and the Panjab*, vol. ii (London, 1841), p. 320.

[3] J. G. Delmerick quoting an extract from his diary dated 11 February 1866, in *PNQ*, vol. ii, no. 23 (August 1885), p. 185.

[4] Baron Charles von Hugel, *Travels in Kashmir and the Panjab* (London, 1845), p. 225. Von Hugel, who visited Hasan Abdāl in December 1835, adds that the stone was moved to its present site following the Sikh occupation. Ibid.

[5] Loc. cit., p. 35.

[6] G. B. Scott, *Religion and Short History of the Sikhs, 1469–1930* (London, 1930), p. 19.

[7] This information was supplied to the author by three informants who visited the shrine at Pañjā Sāhib. According to the first informant the carving in relief was still there in early 1940. The second, who visited the site later in the same year, stated that the 'hand-mark' had been incised but that the edges were sharp. The third, whose visit took place in 1964, reported that the edges were smooth.

indeed destroyed and then later rebuilt as Emīnābād. *The Gazetteer of the Gujranwala District* attributes the destruction to Sher Shāh Sūri, but does not name a source.[1] The janam-sākhīs were sufficiently close to the event to be in contact with authentic memories, and there is every likelihood that their attributing of the event to Bābur is correct. Upon this episode the ascetic ideal has erected an aetiological legend.

The same ascetic ideal was also responsible for a later explanation of how Bābā Nānak happened to have sons. To those of this ascetic persuasion it was unthinkable that the Gurū could be other than completely celibate. It was, however, equally unthinkable that the existence of Sirī Chand and Lakhmī Dās could be doubted. The dilemma was eventually solved by resort to a method of conception which would not involve a renunciation of celibacy. Bābā Nānak, after first resisting his mother's pleas for grandchildren, finally consented for her sake. To fulfil her wish he gave his wife two cloves, thereby inducing parthenogenetic conception of the two boys.[2]

2. NARRATIVE DISCOURSES

The closeness of the narrative discourse form to that of the narrative anecdote has already been noted and for this reason it has been allied to the latter rather than to the more developed discourse form which appears in the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*. This should not, however, imply a complete identity. Whereas there is certainly an identity of purpose, the actual form of the narrative discourse is distinctively different from that of the anecdote.

The term *narrative discourse* designates sākhīs or sub-sākhīs which have taken their origin from compositions by Gurū Nānak and which incorporate these compositions within a contrived conversation or discourse as the response given by Nānak to the questions or comments of an interlocutor. This form should be distinguished on the one hand from the kind of conversation which has not been developed out of a shabad or a shalok; and, on the other, from discourses which have been consciously turned to a didactic purpose by the addition of exegetical supplements.[3] An example of the former is provided by the central portion of the *B40* version of the sākhī 'Bābā Nānak's discourse with Daulat Khān's Qāzī'.[4] Although this portion of the sākhī records a conversation and also includes a series of scriptural quotations the conversation element is in no way dependent upon the quotations. These are mere appendages. The actual conversation relates an independent anecdote and for this reason it has been classified as a narrative anecdote rather than as a narrative discourse. The earlier

---

[1] Loc. cit. (Lahore, 1895), p. 173.

[2] This particular explanation is to be found in the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak*. *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 78–9. The *Gyān-ratanāvalī*, which also relates this story (*GR*, sākhī 50), adds that Nānak also caused his sister Nānakī to conceive in the same manner. To her he gave a clove and a cardamom, as a result of which she gave birth to a son and a daughter.

[3] See below, pp. 98–101.   [4] *B40*, ff. 21b–24a.

portion of the same sākhī can also be regarded primarily as a narrative anecdote relating a conversation, but it should be noted that one of the quotations added to this portion has generated a brief sub-sākhī of the narrative discourse variety.[1]

Narrative discourse should also be distinguished from anecdotes which have developed out of individual works of Gurū Nānak but which have not been cast in the form of discourses. Although the celebrated stories of Sajjaṇ the Robber and Mūlā the Khatrī plainly derive from compositions of the Gurū neither can be described as a narrative discourse. Both are narrative anecdotes.

The nature of the narrative discourse and its manner of development have already been indicated in the preceding chapter. At this point it will be sufficient to recapitulate the standard pattern appearing in all discourses of this kind. The basis is provided by a quotation from the works of Gurū Nānak. This hymn (or series of couplets) provides the answers which Nānak is said to have given during the course of the discussion. A convenient interlocutor is then introduced and appropriate questions or leading comments are devised to match the answers which Nānak will give. These questions and their answers constitute the substance of the discourse. A brief introductory narrative furnishes a setting, and following the terminal quotation the interlocutor either falls at the Gurū's feet or (less commonly) withdraws defeated but unrepentant. Most of the compositions which are used in this manner can be safely regarded as the works of Gurū Nānak. The balance consists of a number of apocryphal works, a few by other Gurūs which have been erroneously attached to Nānak, and in one notable instance a series of shaloks attributed to Sheikh Farīd. All follow the same structural pattern.

One of the least complicated of the narrative discourses is the brief tale entitled 'Lamenting Women Commended' which the *B40* compiler attaches to his version of 'The Encounter with Kaliyug'.

Bābā Nānak and Mardānā then proceeded on their way and came to a village where a death had occured. Women were lamenting, crying out, 'Alas! Alas for our Lord! O God! O God!' Bābā Nānak heard their cries and was greatly saddened. 'Blessed be this town,' he said, 'and blessed be these women who repeat the Name of God.' He then recited a shalok.
'Alas! Alas!' they cry, 'Woe! Woe!'
They scream and tear their hair.
Let them instead take the divine Name and repeat it.
To such Nānak offers himself a sacrifice.
Bābā Nānak and Mardānā then left that place.[2]

The basis of this narrative is the cryptic shalok, quoted above in the course of the anecdote, which appears in the Ādi Granth as *Surplus Shaloks* 6.[3] This provides both the setting for the discourse and the words which the lamenting women utter in order to provide an appropriate point of entry for the shalok.

---

[1] *B40*, f. 21a–b.   [2] *B40*, f. 47a–b   [3] *AG*, p. 1410.

Brief discourses of this kind are not as rare as a cursory reading of the janam-sākhīs might suggest. They are easily missed, for most of them have been incorporated within composite sākhīs in a manner which largely conceals their independent origins. Another example has been given above in the chapter dealing with the constituents of the janam-sākhīs.[1] These single-comment discourses are, however, less common than the longer variety embodying a series of questions. 'The Encounter with Kaliyug' offers a more typical illustration of the standard pattern.[2] In this instance the basis of the discourse is furnished by the shabad *Siri Rāg* 1, a highly suggestive work which begins with the words:

> If for me there were to be built a palace of pearl encrusted with jewels,
> Anointed with musk, with saffron, with the fragrance of aloes and sandal,
> Forbid it, O Lord, that beholding it I should forget Thee and fail to call to mind Thy Name.[3]

Such a stanza indicates an obvious lead for the interlocutor.

Gracious one, if you command I shall erect a palace studded with pearls and anointed with musk.[4]

The second stanza is equally helpful to the narrator.

> If the world were to be encrusted with diamonds and rubies, my bed studded with rubies;
> And if there were to be an alluring damsel, her face glistening with jewels, tempting me with seductive gesture;
> Forbid it, O Lord, that beholding such temptation I should forget Thee and fail to call to mind Thy Name.

For this reply the following lead-in has been devised:

If you so command I shall encrust the whole world with diamonds, and stud a bed with pearls and rubies.[5]

In this manner the discourse continues until the shabad reaches its conclusion.

The words of the shabad also indicated a narrow range of possible interlocutors. Plainly it would have to be someone who possessed the capacity to make such stupendous promises. An earthly king, however powerful, would be unsuitable. The interlocutor had to be one who could offer to 'encrust the whole world with diamonds' and this promise no human could ever fulfil. This indicated a superhuman interlocutor. In cases of this kind God can sometimes be introduced, but hardly in a discourse which involves an evidently sincere proffering of carnal temptations. The solution adopted by the first narrator was evidently suggested by a Puranic precedent. Kaliyug, a personification of the present evil age, had already appeared in earlier tradition and none could be more appro-

---

[1] Bābur offers bhaṅg to Bābā Nānak. See above, pp. 74-5.   [2] *B40*, ff. 44a-47a.
[3] *AG*, p. 14.   [4] *B40*, ff. 44b-45a.   [5] *B40*, f. 45a.

priate for the present need.[1] A suitably fearsome context was accordingly devised with details drawn from traditions of the chimeric variety.

> Gradually the darkness and the rain lifted. When they had cleared there appeared the figure of a demon with huge fangs, the top of its head touching the heavens and its feet the ground. Enormous was its belly and terrifying its evil eyes! Fearsomely it advanced towards them . . .[2]

Kaliyug, have failed to intimidate Bābā Nānak in this manner, then advances his series of offers. The Gurū utters each of the *Siri Rāg* 1 stanzas in succession, Kaliyug makes his submission, and the proto-sākhī is complete.

This analysis concerns the first stage in the development of the discourse. The *B40* version indicates a second stage. To the simple structure provided by the proto-sākhī a number of extra details have been added, notably an apologetic addendum which gives expression to the evolving self-consciousness of the Sikh community.[3]

The proto-sākhī already provided an unusually clear example of the myth of Nānak, and this addition drives the point home with even greater force. It is, however, no more than an addition. A more advanced stage still is reached when simple discourses are incorporated within composite sākhīs, normally in combination with narrative anecdotes. In some instances the discourse provides the nucleus around which other elements cluster, and in others it is added to an existing nucleus. The composite sākhī concerning Bābā Nānak's meeting with Rājā Śivanābh is an example of the former.[4] The discourse with Bābur illustrates the latter.[5]

An obvious parallel to the narrative discourse of the janam-sākhīs would appear to be the Persian *munāzara* form. The resemblance is, however, strictly superficial and concerns little more than the evident fact that both embody dialogue. The *munāzara* is properly understood as a battle of wits, a genuine disputation in which both parties genuinely participate.[6] This distinguishes it from the one-sided question-and-answer, or contrived comment-and-answer, pattern of the janam-sākhīs. Similarly the regular occurrence of questions in the janam-sākhī form should not suggest that the janam-sākhī discourse bears any significant resemblance to the Muslim *mas'ala*. The *mas'ala* is a question arising from a dispute which is put to a *mujtahid* and which he answers with a *fatwā*. The nearest approach which the janam-sākhīs make to this form is the manner in which the *Miharbān* commentators provide suitable contexts for their exegesis by bringing a Sikh or group of Sikhs to Bābā Nānak with questions suited to the passages which they wish to expound. This is, however, far removed from the *mas'ala*. Moreover, it is distinct from the narrative discourse form. Exegetical intentions are a feature of the third of the janam-sākhī forms.

---

[1] See above, pp. 65–6. Buddhist traditions concerning the temptations of the Buddha may also have aided the structuring of the discourse.

[2] *B40*, f. 44a.   [3] *B40*, ff. 46a–47a.   [4] *B40*, ff. 144b–154a. See below, pp. 157–65.

[5] *B40*, f. 71a–b. See above, pp. 74–5.

[6] Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht, 1968), pp. 97–8, 717.

3. DIDACTIC DISCOURSES

It is a fundamental difference of intention which distinguishes the narrative discourse from the *didactic discourse*. Most didactic discourses actually use the narrative discourse as a basis, but transform it by the addition of a lengthy *exegetical supplement*. The conscious intention of the *Miharbān* commentators responsible for the development of the didactic variety of discourse was exposition of the works of Nānak. The narrative discourse provided them with a convenient vehicle, and in accordance with their primary purpose they attached to the scriptural quotations which recur in many of the narrative discourses passages which purported to explain the meaning of those quotations. In most cases there was no need to depart from the established pattern of the narrative discourse form. It was sufficient to add the words *tis kā param-ārath* after each quotation, and then insert the exegesis. The formula *tis kā paramārath* means 'its sublime meaning', and because these words appear with such unfailing regularity the exegetical supplement which they introduce is sometimes designated the *paramārath* form.[1]

The difference between the narrative discourse and the didactic discourse is conveniently illustrated by the *B40* version of the sākhī entitled 'Bābā Nānak's Discourse with Sheikh Braham'.[2] The sākhī is primarily based upon the series of shaloks attributed to Sheikh Farīd, together with some similar works of Gurū Nānak. These compositions were developed into a narrative discourse of the standard question-and-answer pattern, and this must have been the full extent of the proto-sākhī. The *B40* compiler has, however, interpolated a section borrowed from a *Miharbān* version of the same sākhī.[3] In this particular instance he does not use the customary *tis kā paramārath* formula, but much of the extra material which he introduces is of precisely this *paramārath* kind. Another example is provided by a similar interpolation in the sākhī 'A Discourse with Siddhs at Achal', where the borrowing includes the introductory formula.[4]

These two examples are, however, strictly interpolations, with neither making any substantial difference to the structure of the discourse in which it occurs. Didactic discourses are untypical of the *B40* collection and of all other janam-sākhīs except those of the *Miharbān* tradition. Whereas discourses of this kind are the standard form for the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* they appear in other janam-sākhīs only as borrowings taken from various recensions of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*.[5] Exegetical supplements grafted on to narrative discourses are the stock form used by the commentators responsible for the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, and the term which they have applied to the form (*gośṭ*) can conveniently be

---

[1] Mohan Singh Uberoi, *A History of Panjabi Literature* (Amritsar, 1956), p. 50.

[2] *B40*, ff. 57b–65b. For a more detailed analysis of the sākhī see below, pp. 131–5.

[3] *B40*, ff. 60a–64b.

[4] *B40*, ff. 118b–120a. The *Ādi Sākhīs* also include a similar interpolation at this point. *AS*, pp. 73–5. See below, p. 206. Both compilers have used the same source.

[5] In addition to the two examples noted above the principal *Miharbān* borrowings included in the *B40 Janam-sākhī* are to be found on folios 2b–5b, 112a–b, and 210a–218a.

retained as an alternative label for their variety of discourse. Although the word *goṣṭ* means simply 'discourse' its usage in this study is limited to didactic discourses bearing the hallmarks of the *Miharbān* tradition.

In its more advanced stages the didactic discourse is distinguished by more than the mere addition of exegesis. A developed *goṣṭ* expresses a particular theme and it is to the enunciation of this theme that the commentator's efforts are directed. In most cases the theme is suggested by the shabad or shalok which provides the nucleus of the discourse. A few have, however, been constructed in defence of a preconceived view concerning particular doctrinal issues.

This latter variety is well illustrated by the only *Miharbān* borrowing to have been recorded as a complete and separate unit by the *B40* compiler. The borrowing appears in the *B40 Janam-sākhī* as two consecutive discourses with closely related themes. The first (*B40* sākhī 54) insists upon an obligation to meditate upon the divine Name (*nām simaran*) during the early hours of the morning; and the second (*B40* sākhī 55) extends the same insistence to include an early-morning bathe. Both have been constructed point by point and may be represented in the following summary form:

The Way of Salvation

Goṣṭ 1 (*B40* sākhī no. 54, ff.210a–214a)

Theme:	The necessity of *nām simaran*.	
Interlocutor:	Gurū Aṅgad.	
Setting:	Bābā Nānak goes to bathe in the Rāvī river during the last watch of the night. He then meditates and sings praises to God.	210a–b
Treatment:	*Nām simaran* must be performed early in the morning every day.	211a
	An exhortation to resist the temptation to abandon the discipline.	211a–212b
	The reward of following the discipline.	212b
	The importance of associating with the few perfected devotees who have already discovered the way.	213b–214b

Goṣṭ 2 (*B40* sākhī no. 55, ff.214b–218a)

Theme:	The daily discipline.	
Interlocutor:	Gurū Aṅgad.	
Setting:	Bābā Nānak sits in Kartārpur during the third watch of the night.	214b
Treatment:	The merit of early rising and bathing.	214b–215b
	An exhortation to follow truth and goodness throughout the remainder of the day.	216a–b
	The fate of those who practise falsehood and deceit.	216b
	The necessity of *nām simaran* reaffirmed; oral repetition specified as the proper method.	216b–217a
	The human body as the dwelling-place of God.	217b

Each point of the argument is supported by an appropriate quotation, with intervening dialogue constructed out of the material provided by the passages quoted and from the distinctive doctrines which the commentator wishes to communicate. In some instances this is skilfully done; in others it is patently naive.

Gurū Aṅgadjī then asked, 'Respected Bābājī, He who is called God—where does He live? In what village does He dwell? . . .'[1]

This enables the commentator to introduce a quotation referring to the dwelling-place of the divine Name, but his method is on this occasion scarcely felicitous. Such crudities are, however, very rare.

It seems clear that the *B40* compiler introduced these two *Miharbān* discourses because of a personal interest in the practice of *nām simaran.* This same concern is expressed with even greater emphasis in the *Miharbān* interpolation which appears in the Achal discourse. The didactic portion is of particular interest in this latter case because it illustrates the manner in which a commentator would carry his exegesis beyond the meaning intended by Nānak to a position which is actually contrary to the Gurū's teachings. The particular point which the *Miharbān* commentator was anxious to communicate is that salvation is to be secured through constant repetition of the name of God (*rām*). The second stanza of Gurū Nānak's *Sūhī* 1 seemed to afford a suitable text to quote in support of the theory and in his exegetical supplement the commentator emphasizes the point by including a twelvefold repetition of the word 'Rām'.[2]

Although the second stanza of *Sūhī* 1 could, in isolation, be interpreted in this manner it does not actually make the point, and the burden of Gurū Nānak's teachings in their totality is clearly opposed to the commentator's exclusive insistence upon mechanical repetition. The commentator has reverted to an earlier interpretation which Nānak had deliberately opposed. The Gurū's own insistence was upon the interiorization of the process termed *nām simaran* or *nām japan*, and although this could include mechanical repetition it was by no means limited to it. When, as in this particular instance, Nānak uses the words *nām japai* they must be interpreted in the wider context of his teachings, not in isolation.

The commentator was, however, one who retained a firm belief in the efficacy of the old method and his conviction was shared by the author of a narrative source used by the *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs* compilers. The *B40* compiler's unquestioning acceptance of the theory presumably explains an interesting slip which occurs when he quotes the stanza a second time. In the first instance he correctly reproduces the term *nām japai*, but in requoting it he substitutes *rām* for *nām*.[3] There can be no doubt that the *Miharbān*, *B40*, and *Ādi Sākhīs* compilers were all expressing the dominant interpretation of their period. The *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler adds to the repetition of *rām* an instruction to use the ascription *vāh gurū* ('praise to the Gurū') in the same mechanical manner.[4]

[1] *B40*, f. 217a.   [2] *B40*, f. 118b.   [3] *B40*, f. 119a.
[4] *AS*, p. 75. Cf. *B40*, f. 196b.

Having dealt with this subject the commentary then proceeds to discuss another critical issue. How could an idol-worshipper such as Nāmdev have attained to salvation?[1] His attainment could not be doubted, for he had been included in the sacred scripture compiled by Gurū Arjan. But nor could his idol-worshipping propensities be denied. Once again the commentary departs radically from the actual quotation which it purports to expound. The issue must have been a genuine problem within the community during the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.

In yet another instance the *B40* compiler, in common with other compilers of narrative janam-sākhīs, has introduced an exegetical supplement which reverses a meaning intended by Gurū Nānak. In most versions the sākhī 'The Child Nānak's Discourse with his Teacher' largely consists of a didactic discourse based on the shabad *Siri Rāg* 6.[2] The message which the third stanza communicates is that all men, whether high or low, pass their lives in vain if they neglect the paramount duty of meditation on the divine Name. Some are compelled to beg whereas others are exalted to kingship, but upon all there lies the same responsibility and the same penalty for neglecting it. In this stanza Gurū Nānak is not commending begging, and elsewhere he deprecates it. The commentator, however, interprets the passage as an expression of approval for the practice of begging. Having described the nature of divine retribution he concludes:

Such will be the condition of those who enjoy the comforts and pleasures of sovereignty but neglect to repeat the Name of God, whereas they who remember God and live by begging shall receive high honour in the court of God.[3]

Exegesis of this kind represents the continuing pressure of the ascetic ideal. Didactic discourses offered a particularly convenient vehicle for such ideals, a feature which does much to explain the strong *Miharbān* preference for this particular form.

4. HETERODOX DISCOURSES

It has already been observed how later traditions, within the Sikh community or closely allied to it, are sometimes distinguished by a marked divergence from the teachings and evident intention of Gurū Nānak. Some of these deviant traditions can be traced to the influence of contemporary Islam in the Pañjāb, others derive from Nāth sources, and yet others are curious amalgams drawn from a variety of sources. Many give expression to gnostic interpretations whereas others are more concerned with trite epigrams. In tone and content they range from mild heresy to virulent polemic.

There is thus a considerable variety covered by the works of deviant

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 119b–120a. *AS*, p. 74. The *B40* version also introduces the idol-worshipping Dhannā into the discussion.

[2] *B40*, ff. 2b–5b. *Mih JS* I.11–15. *AS*, pp. 4–6. *Pur JS*, pp. 3–5. *Bālā JS*, pp. 10–14.

[3] *B40*, f. 5a.

traditions. Three features provide a common bond. The first is their generally heretical nature; the second is the uniformly poor quality of the verse in which they are expressed; and the third their strong preference for a discourse form. These reasons justify a convenient grouping under the common heading *heterodox discourse*. Occasionally a basis is provided for a discourse of this kind by an authentic composition of Gurū Nānak, but apocryphal verse is the general rule. As with other varieties of discourse settings are contrived and then largely ignored. It is the actual discourse which commands attention.

Most of the works incorporating heterodox beliefs developed apart from the janam-sākhīs and circulated independently. The purpose of their authors and promoters differed in some measure from that of the janam-sākhī compilers, and in most cases their products were too lengthy to encourage borrowing by the janam-sākhī compilers. The differences were, however, by no means absolute, and works which could not be included *in toto* might well provide extracts of manageable length. Heretical doctrine was not automatically excluded. The prerequisite was that it should purport to represent the authentic teachings of Bābā Nānak. This claim the heterodox discourses made explicitly and as a result a few extracts found their way into the various janam-sākhīs.

Independent works of this nature which circulated within the Sikh community during the janam-sākhī period may be divided into three categories. First there were two lengthy discourses set in the context of Bābā Nānak's alleged visit to Arabia. These are 'The Mecca Discourse' (*makke dī goṣṭi*) and 'The Medīnā Discourse' (*madine dī goṣṭi*). The first of these purports to record a debate which Nānak conducted during his visit to Mecca, and the second an encounter with the quranic King Qārūn. During the course of the latter the Gurū recites a homily entitled the *Nasīhat-nāmā*. Neither discourse has been actually incorporated within any of the principal janam-sākhīs, but they have occasionally been recorded in conjunction with a janam-sākhī or included within a single manuscript binding.[1] An abbreviated version of both is to be found at the conclusion of the *B40* manuscript, obviously the work of a later copyist.[2] Both are plainly spurious in so far as they are attributed to Gurū Nānak. It is to the 'Triumph over Islam' theme of the janam-sākhī period that the two discourses properly belong.

A second group, closely allied to the Mecca and Medīnā discourses, consists of compositions attributed to Gurū Nānak which embody beliefs derived from the popular Sūfism of the period. These works are invariably set in the context of a debate held with a famous Sūfī, normally one who had lived prior to the time of Nānak. They are important in that they provide statements of the variety of Sūfī doctrine which evidently com-

---

[1] An example is IOL MS Panj. B41. The janam-sākhī terminates on f. 253. Thereafter the manuscript records the Mecca and Medīnā discourses (ff. 254–395). Sardar Kuldip Singh Bedi's manuscript also includes both discourses in addition to its *Purātan* text.

[2] *B40*, ff. 229–38 (Arabic pagination). The Gurmukhī pagination does not extend to this point. For an English summary of the *B40* version see *B40(Eng)*, Introduction, pp. 10–11.

manded a widespread following in the rural Pañjāb of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and also for the testimony which in common with some of the narrative discourses they bear to the enduring reputation of certain Sūfī pīrs. 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī, Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī, Farīd al-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i-Shakar, Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā, Rukn al-Dīn of Multān, and Sharaf al-Dīn of Pānīpat all figure in heterodox discourses. Two of the more important compositions included in discourses of this kind are the *Tih Sipāre* and the *Hāzar-nāmā*.[1]

In one instance a discourse is said to have been held not with a figure who had predeceased Nānak but with one who came after him. This was Bābā Lāl of Dhiānpur, near Batālā.[2] Although Bābā Lāl was a Hindu, his celebrated association with Dārā Shikoh indicates that the Sikh 'Discourse with Bābā Lāl' should be included in the second category of heterodox discourses. The Sikh tradition derives directly from the record of Dārā Shikoh's own discourses.[3]

A third category of heterodox discourses is provided by works which owe their origin to the *hatha-yoga* doctrines of the Nāth tradition. The distinctively Nāth element incorporated within narrative sākhīs bears ample witness to the widespread influence of the Nāth tradition in seventeenth-century Pañjāb, and from this third category of heterodox discourses it is evident that in spite of Gurū Nānak's strictures upon Nāth beliefs, these beliefs had in fact penetrated the later Sikh community. Within the community the doctrines and practices of *hatha-yoga* were accorded a particular loyalty by the so-called Udāsī sādhūs, but it is clear that respect for these doctrines extended beyond the limited Udāsī circle. This is apparent from the willingness of the *B40* compiler to include such material in his janam-sākhī. An even clearer instance is provided by the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*. Like the *B40* janam-sākhī it is not to be identified as an Udāsī document, but it nevertheless includes an early version of the lengthy *Prāṇ Saṅgalī*.[4]

The *Prāṇ Saṅgalī* is the most important of the heterodox discourses with a Nāth orientation. Although it is not quoted *in extenso* by the *B40* compiler it does receive a passing reference at the conclusion of the Sivanābh sākhī.[5] In its extant form the entire work extends to eighty cantos and is plainly a collection of several compositions in verse connected by briefer narrative passages.[6] The collection takes the form of a discourse which, as the *B40* reference indicates, is set in the context of a visit to Rājā Sivanābh's domain in Siṅghalādīp. Sivanābh begins the discourse with Bābā Nānak and is later joined by Gorakhnāth and other Siddhs. The discourse proceeds in the usual manner, an appropriate question by one of the interlocutors being followed by Bābā Nānak's reply. Piār Singh attributes the composition of the various parts, and also

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 53a–55b, 56a–57a.

[2] Sujān Rāi Bhaṇḍārī, *Khulāsat-ut-Tavārīkh*, English trans. in Muhammad Akbar, *The Punjab under the Mughals* (Lahore, 1948), pp. 291–2.

[3] Piār Singh, 'A Critical Survey of Panjabi Prose in the Seventeenth Century' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University, 1968), p. 133.

[4] *Pur JS*, pp. 89, 118.   [5] *B40*, f. 153b.   [6] Piār Singh, op. cit., p. 129.

their collection into a single work, to the latter half of the seventeenth century.[1] Portions of it may perhaps pre-date this period, but there seems to be little doubt that his opinion is substantially correct.

Although the *Prāṇ Saṅgalī* must have enjoyed a considerable popularity during the eighteenth century it subsequently came to be regarded as apocryphal. A tradition related by Santokh Singh towards the middle of the nineteenth century implies this conviction. Santokh Singh relates that Gurū Arjan, while preparing the compilation of the Ādi Granth at the beginning of the seventeenth century, received news of a work which (so it was claimed) had been composed by Bābā Nānak during his visit to Sri Lanka and left there. A Sikh named Paiṛā Mokhā was forthwith dispatched to Sri Lanka, from where he returned bearing a copy of the *Prāṇ Saṅgalī*. Gurū Arjan examined the work, but being unconvinced of its authenticity declined to include it in the Ādi Granth.[2]

This opinion was evidently not shared by the eighteenth-century community, for manuscript copies of portions of the work were circulating freely in the Pañjāb during this period. Amongst the more important works which came to be included in the *Prāṇ Saṅgalī* were the *Dhiāo Bihaṅgam kā* ('The Bird Canto'), also referred to as the *Goṣṭ Niraṅkār Nāl* ('Discourse with God'); the *Goṣṭ Ātme Paramātme kī*; the *Sākhī Ved Sadāe*; the *Gyān Surodaya*; and the *Jugāvalī*.[3] The last of these is to be found in the *Colebrooke* manuscript.[4]

Another popular work belonging to this same cycle of Nāth-oriented traditions is 'A Discourse with Ajitta Randhava' (*goṣṭi ajitte randhāve nāl*). Bhāī Gurdās relates that Jittā (or Ajittā), a Randhāvā Jaṭ, was one of the more prominent disciples of Gurū Nānak.[5] Apart from a reference to his upright behaviour Bhāī Gurdās tells us nothing about him, but later narrators have enlisted him in a number of narrative anecdotes. The discourse in which he is said to have participated is of particular interest as an example of later polemic concerning disputed authority within the Sikh community. A version has been included in the *B40 Janam-sākhī*.[6]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 130.

[2] Santokh Singh, *Gur Pratāp Sūray* (the *Sūraj Prakāś*), rāsi 3, aṅk 32. Vīr Singh edition, vol. vi, pp. 2038–43. Mohan Singh Uberoi claims that the *Prāṇ Saṅgalī* was included in the proscribed *Khārī Bīṛ* version of the Ādi Granth. Mohan Singh, *Kabir—His Biography* (Lahore, 1934), p. 57. If this is correct it will have been an appreciably shorter work than the extant text. It appears, however, that Mohan Singh must be confusing the *Prāṇ Saṅgalī* with the *Hakīkat Rāh Mukām Rāje Śivanābh kī*, a description of the way to Sri Lanka attributed to Paiṛā Mokhā. Descriptions of the Banno manuscript (the earliest *Khārī Bīṛ* manuscript) make no reference to the *Prāṇ Saṅgalī*, and the *Prāṇ Saṅgalī* itself includes no description of Paiṛā Mokhā's alleged journey to Sri Lanka. For further descriptive accounts of the *Prāṇ Saṅgalī* see Piār Singh, op. cit., pp. 128–34; Jagjīt Singh, 'A Critical and Comparative Study of the Janam Sakhis of Guru Nanak' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University, 1967), pp. 9–10, 219, 278–82, 303–4, 332–4, 371; Rattan Singh Jaggī, *Gurū Nānak Bāṇī* (Paṭiālā, 1968), pp. 33–52. The extant text was edited by Sant Sampūran Singh and published in the Deva-nāgrī script by Mohan Singh Vaid of Tarn Tāran in 1928.

[3] Piār Singh, op. cit.

[4] Photozincograph Facsimile (Dehrā Dūn, 1885), pp. 170–93. Sākhī 46 of the *Pur JS* is also taken from the *Prāṇ Saṅgalī*. Jagjīt Singh, op. cit., p. 332. *Pur JS*, pp. 84–6.

[5] *BG* XI:14. *SLTGN(Eng)*, p. 44.

[6] *B40*, ff. 111a–116b. The reference to disputed authority occurs on f. 115a: 'Son, they will set

5. CODES OF DISCIPLINE

One last form which deserves to be noted is the *rahit-nāmā* or 'code of discipline'. This warrants a brief notice, not because it is accorded any prominence in the janam-sākhīs but rather because the rudimentary examples which do make occasional appearances in the janam-sākhīs were later to develop into a literary form of fundamental importance for the eighteenth-century Sikh community. It was during the course of the eighteenth century that the Khālsā discipline crystallized into a coherent code of conduct (*rahit*), and it was to give formal expression to this evolving code that the *rahit-nāmā* was developed. As links in the chain which connects the seventeenth- and the nineteenth-century communities the succession of *rahit-nāmās* is of some importance, and to this day modern versions continue to serve as a means of maintaining the coherence of the community on the basis of an agreed code of Khālsā conduct.[1]

Although the janam-sākhīs incorporate no evolved *rahit-nāmās* they do include statements which can safely be regarded as the seeds from which the later codes were to grow. These range from the brief and oft-repeated slogan *nām dān isnān* to more detailed lists of instructions issued by God to Nānak as patterns of conduct for his followers. The *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs*, following a common source, include one such rudimentary *rahit-nāmā* in the sākhī 'An Interview with God',[2] and another appears at the conclusion of a *Miharbān* interview of the same kind.[3] In both instances the setting is important. It was evidently believed to be necessary that the words of the *rahit* should proceed directly from God. The later *rahit-nāmās* of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries consist largely of instructions ascribed to Gurū Gobind Siṅgh.

up *mañjīs* [seats of spiritual authority] in their houses and sit on them, but these people will be punished.' The nature of the dispute appears to be indicated in a question concerning the shaving of heads on f. 113a. This suggests a conflict between an ascetic tradition and the Khālsā. The cryptic reference to 'the ninth garb' (? the ninth Gurū) on f. 111b probably relates to the same issue.

[1] Authorized editions are issued by the Shiromaṇī Gurdwārā Parbandhak Committee in Amritsar under the title *Sikh Rahit Maryādā*. For an English translation of the current version see Kanwaljīt Kaur and Indarjīt Singh (trans.), *Rehat Maryada: A Guide to the Sikh Way of Life* (London, 1971). An important example of an early *rahit-nāmā* available in print is the *Prem Sumārg Granth* (ed. Randhīr Singh, Jalandhar, 1965). Two others were published in the nineteenth century in English translation by Sir Attar Singh of Bhadaur under the title *The Rayhit Nama of Pralad Rai, or the excellent conversation of the Duswan Padsha, and Nand Lal's Rayhit Nama or rules for the Guidance of the Sikhs in Religious Matters* (Lahore, 1876). See also E. Trumpp, *The Ādi Granth* (London, 1877), pp. cxii–cxvi; and W. H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 51–2.

[2] *B40*, ff. 125b–126a. *AS*, pp. 2–3.

[3] *Mih JS* II.156. This *rahit-nāmā* is particularly specific in its reference to intoxicants.

8

THE ASSEMBLING AND
TRANSMISSION OF THE
JANAM-SĀKHĪ TRADITIONS

IN their earliest stages the growth processes and the transmission of the evolving janam-sākhīs were evidently confined to oral tradition, and for fully three centuries oral tradition remained the area of major expansion. Although the first written collections must have been recorded within a hundred years of the Gurū's death (and probably earlier) their contribution has inevitably been more in terms of recording various phases of development than of actually stimulating it. The written word, though by no means static, tends to stabilize a tradition and to inhibit further expansion or radical diversification. By contrast, oral tradition can be vigorously dynamic, particularly when it lacks the conventional restraints commonly applied to the repetition of sacred texts. The oral tradition of the janam-sākhīs has, on the whole, lacked these.

The study of oral tradition has interested philologists for many decades and has long since demonstrated its critical contribution to the understanding of Old Testament development and transmission.[1] More recently its methodology, refined and extended, has been widely applied in such areas as African and Pacific pre-history.[2] As a result of this research much has been discovered concerning techniques of oral transmission and methods of analysing its products. Amongst the conclusions which must now be regarded as firmly established is the insistence that oral tradition does not necessarily lack safeguards. Oral traditions can in fact be transmitted with relatively little change provided that certain conventions are observed. These include specific memory training, mnemonic devices, control over the recital by certain groups or members of the audience, and a normal preference for poetry rather than prose.[3]

Oral traditions of this controlled variety are, however, much different from those which lie behind the janam-sākhīs. None of the conventional safeguards have been applied to the transmission of the anecdotes which eventually came to be collected into janam-sākhīs. These were anecdotes which did not need to be learnt by heart. The one essential feature was that

---

[1] A notable contribution has, in more recent years, been made by a Scandinavian school of Old Testament scholars. For a brief summary of their work see Eduard Nielsen, *Oral Tradition: A Modern Problem in Old Testament Introduction* (London, 1954). The more prominent names are those of Mowinckel, H. S. Nyberg, I. Engnell, G. Widengren, and Nielsen himself.

[2] For a useful introduction covering both the techniques of analysis and their application to particular African traditions see Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (London, 1965).

[3] Ibid., pp. 31–43.

they should be seen to fulfil the requirements of the myth which they were intended to express. This imposed a certain limited restraint in that it required a general faithfulness to the current understanding of the person and mission of Nānak, but it was a restraint which could have little effect on wide areas of the evolving tradition. It was only the *bāṇī* (the actual works of Nānak himself) which had to be memorized. The traditions which were built around and beyond the *bāṇī* needed no such limitation.

The freedom to expand which was thus provided for the oral tradition concerning Gurū Nānak was greatly encouraged by other features. If in fact there were any members of the early Sikh community specifically appointed to narrate the tradition there is no evidence that any of these narrators ever received any training in memory or transmission skills. In practice the procedure was almost certainly that within a local community (*saṅgat*) the role of narrator would by general consent be accorded to a particular person. Age, social status, piety, or eloquence could presumably have determined the choice. This person, without either the benefit of training or the compulsion to adhere strictly to a received version, would relate anecdotes concerning the Gurū in words meaningful to himself and to his audience. The reactions of his audience would inevitably operate not as a control but rather as an encouragement to mutate and expand. The resultant pattern of development manifests, as one might expect, a pronounced affection for the simple wonder-story and a predictable reliance upon other traditions current during the period of growth.

Finally, it must be remembered that the anecdotes which together constitute the janam-sākhīs are prose narratives, not verse. Prose is not an impossible medium for a generally static oral tradition (the Icelandic sagas demonstrate this), but certainly it is vastly inferior to verse as a means of consistent preservation. Given this and the other features mentioned above it is scarcely surprising that the janam-sākhī traditions should expand with such speed and in such diverse forms. For the same reasons it is understandable that traditions relating to the authentic life of Nānak should be few and, in most instances, difficult to recognize. Although such elements certainly exist within the janam-sākhī traditions, they are deeply embedded and when extracted provide little more than glimpses of the historical Nānak.[1]

It seems clear that the main focus of the transmission process was the cult centre. For the early Sikh community this centre was the dharamsālā, a building or portion of a building which is nowhere described with any precision but which could evidently be anything capable of holding a small group of people. In some villages a separate structure may have been provided, in others the purpose may have been served by using a room attached to a private house, and in yet others a room in everyday use may have been appropriated for the regular meetings of the group. This much is reasonable conjecture. What seems certain is that a single room normally served as a dharamsālā, and what is certain beyond all doubt is that this dharamsālā was the cult centre.

[1] For an attempt to identify these elements see *GNSR*, pp. 68–147.

Within its dharamsālā a *saṅgat*, or congregation, would meet for *kīrtan* (the singing of devotional songs). *Kīrtan* would be the principal corporate activity of any local group of Sikhs, and an important supplement would be the recitation of narrative traditions concerning the first Gurū (*kathā*). There were many local *saṅgats* scattered throughout rural Pañjāb, and within each there will have been this regular pattern of *kīrtan* and *kathā*. In a few favoured instances a manuscript collection of sākhīs was obtained and thereafter the stories of the Gurū could be read. (The *B40* patron specifically states that he commissioned the writing of his janam-sākhī for the benefit of the *saṅgat* to which he belonged.[1]) For most *saṅgats*, how-ever, there will have been a continuing dependence on oral tradition until at least the late nineteenth and perhaps into the twentieth century.

The home was presumably a second focus of the transmission process. There are no positive indications within the recorded janam-sākhīs to indicate that the written collections were used domestically during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but this testimony relates only to the recorded tradition. Within Sikh homes the transmission process will almost invariably have been concerned with the continuing oral tradition. In this respect the home will normally have reflected the dharamsālā. The tradition current within any particular village or district will have found its primary expression in the dharamsālā, and a repetition in the Sikh homes of that district.

Because of the scattered nature of the Sikh community different areas inevitably developed their own local traditions. This produced variant versions of sākhīs which had gained a wide currency, and local sākhīs confined to particular areas. Some of the variants together with instances of unique local traditions find expression in the recorded collections and help to determine the geographical areas in which the different collections were compiled. It should not, however, be supposed that *saṅgats* lived in complete isolation from each other or from the community's principal centres of activity. Pilgrimage has been a regular feature of Sikh custom since at least the time of Gurū Amar Dās (1552–74), and right from the time of Nānak himself visits to the Gurū will have been a joy for many and an obligation for all who could reasonably make them. The cross-fertilization which was continually provided by such pilgrimages ensured that the pattern of janam-sākhī development constituted a close-knit web rather than a splay of lines connected only at their point of origin.

It has already been suggested that the agent of transmission within the local *saṅgat* could have been any person who possessed acceptable qualifications as a narrator. In practice the role will commonly have been performed by Khatrīs. The Gurūs were all Khatrīs, Bhāī Gurdās and Miharbān were both Khatrīs, and Dayā Rām Abrol, compiler and copyist of the *B40* janam-sākhī, was also a Khatrī.[2] Leadership by Khatrīs would

---

[1] *B40*, f. 84b.
[2] Manī Singh's caste connections are, like his janam-sākhī role, disputed. According to the late nineteenth-century writer Gyān Singh he was a Jaṭ. The traditional consensus claims, how-ever, that he was a Kamboh. *MK*, p. 712n.

be no more than a continuation of a well-established pattern of leadership
in rural Pañjāb. Social status, education, and a traditional role as teachers
of the Jaṭs would serve as strong qualifications. It was not, however, an
invariable pattern. The author of the *Dabistān-i-Mazāhib* reports that in
the early seventeenth century Jaṭs were already moving into positions of
authority,[1] and during the succeeding century they assumed a dominant
status within the community. The recorded janam-sākhī collections seem
to reflect this change. Whereas the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, *B40*, and the
Gyān-ratanāvali accord a greater prominence to Khatrīs, the *Bālā* tradi-
tion shifts attention to the Jaṭs. The latter tradition may, in fact, represent
an aspect of the Jaṭs' ascent to dominance, and the later popularity of the
Bālā janam-sākhīs may in some measure derive from the establishment of
their dominant status.

Oral circulation from the time of Nānak's own lifetime constitutes the
first major phase in the evolution of the janam-sākhīs. The second begins
with the initial recording of a selection of sākhīs. This second phase will
have been initiated for a number of reasons. One which can be safely
assumed is the measure of sanctity which India traditionally attaches to
holy books. Everyone else had their sacred scriptures, and although the
fifth Gurū Arjan had provided his followers with their own Sikh scripture
in 1604 there was no reason why they should not have more if there
existed material suitable for recording. The *Sākhī Pothī*, or 'Volume of
Sākhīs' was soon accorded a respect second only to the *Granth Sāhib*
compiled by Gurū Arjan.

A second reason was presumably a growing awareness on the part of
some literate Sikhs of the unreliability of oral tradition as a means of
accurate transmission. All would have claimed a concern for accuracy, and
a few will have perceived that uncontrolled oral transmission must
seriously endanger the objective. The answer for such men will have been
an attempt to fix the tradition by setting it down in writing.

These appear to have been the two main reasons for the earliest
decisions to record the tradition. Others may be added as conjectures. In
some instances a particular Sikh, having heard a recitation of the tradition
at a location away from his home (perhaps from someone of renowned
piety, or at one of the pilgrimage centres) may have desired to have it
repeated to his own family or *saṅgat*. Rather than trust to his own memory
he may have arranged to have the tradition recorded in order that he
might return home with the manuscript.

Four principal stages may be observed in the recording of janam-sākhīs.
The first is the random collection. A small number of sākhīs were selected
from the current oral tradition and recorded in an essentially haphazard
order. This phase appears to have been initiated during the late sixteenth
century, or perhaps at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The
earliest available examples suggest that the only deference paid to the
notion of chronology was a rough grouping according to birth, childhood,
manhood, and death. Chronology was of only secondary importance. The

[1] *PPP* 1.1 (April 1967), p. 57.

janam-sākhīs were more concerned with the myth of Nānak than with the actual pattern of his life, and a coherent sequence of anecdotes was not essential to their primary purpose.

Amongst the extant manuscripts the earliest example of this first phase is provided by *LPD 194*. It is not, however, a particularly good example, for the impulse to order and arrange is already at work. A better example would have been the collection which evidently lay behind *LDP 194*,[1] and an even better example is provided by the janam-sākhīs of the *Bālā* tradition. Although the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs emerge later than the tradition which leads through *LDP 194* into the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs, these later manuscripts are actually more primitive in terms of structure. A generally consistent pattern is sustained up to the point where Nānak ventures out on his travels, but thereafter the selection and recording of anecdotes is essentially random.

The same feature is also evident in much of the *B40 Janam-sākhī*, particularly in the portion which was drawn directly from oral tradition.[2] Although it was compiled towards the middle of the eighteenth century this portion is perhaps the best of all available examples of the first primitive phase of janam-sākhī recording. Other portions of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* manifest the same disarray, but none are as primitive in structure as the group of sākhīs derived from the compiler's oral source. No other group of sākhīs has quite the same simplicity of narrative pattern nor its complete absence of quotations from the works of Nānak. The *B40 Janam-sākhī* is plainly an anthology drawn from a variety of sources, and as such it manages to combine highly evolved sākhīs with the most primitive we possess.

The second stage in the recording of janam-sākhīs closely followed the first. This new development was marked by a concern for chronology and a consequent effort to order the assortment of sākhīs into a coherent sequence. The process which is already evident in *LDP 194* reaches its climax in the detailed structures of the later *Purātan* manuscripts (the *Colebrooke* and the *Hāfizābād* janam-sākhīs). In the case of the childhood and early manhood sākhīs this task presented few problems. For this period of Nānak's life the chief issues concerned the timing of his betrothal and marriage, and the order in which his two sons were born. It was the period of Nānak's travels which provided the *Purātan* tradition with its greatest challenge and it was with considerable ingenuity that the challenge was answered. The result is a pattern of four major journeys corresponding to the four cardinal points of the compass, a schema which was presumably suggested by the ancient *digvijaya* tradition. Into this pattern numerous travel anecdotes have been fitted. There are, it is true, several flaws. The order is not always consistent, there are some obvious gaps, the compiler was obviously much more interested in outward rather than homeward journeys, and one anecdote which was evidently overlooked has been appended in the form of a fifth journey.[3] It is, nevertheless, something of a

---

[1] See below, p. 188.   [2] *B40*, ff. 154b–199a, 203a–205a. See below, pp. 220–6.
[3] Sākhī 52, 'Discourse with Siddhs at Gorakh-haṭaṛī'. *Pur JS*, pp. 104–6.

tour de force and it marks the high point of janam-sākhī restructuring. Macauliffe followed this *Purātan* pattern closely in his account of the life of Nānak, and few biographers have since departed from it.

The manner in which different compilers used the same material to construct differing chronologies is illustrated by the varying placement of the sākhī 'An Interview with God'. The anecdote related in this sākhī describes how Nānak was summoned to the Divine Court and there ordained by God to go forth into the world to preach the divine Name. The *B40* compiler has taken this anecdote from an earlier collection, and following his predecessor's evident indifference to chronological concerns he has recorded it at a point more than half-way through his own collection.[1] If the *B40* collection were to be regarded as a coherent sequence it could only mean that Nānak had been preaching his message long before God had actually commissioned him to do so. The *B40* compiler is not, however, committed to any rigorous preservation of chronological sequences and follows them only when using a source which has already devised one. Most of his material represents the first stage of janam-sākhī compilation where sequence means little or nothing.

The compiler responsible for the *Purātan* chronology could not share this indifference. A logical place had to be found for the anecdote. In the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs it is recorded immediately before Nānak's departure from Sultānpur.[2] Nānak's travels (interpreted by the *Purātan* tradition as missionary journeys) begin with his departure from Sultānpur and this suggested a Sultānpur context for the anecdote. In accordance with this conviction the compiler has introduced it into the narrative relating Nānak's disappearance in the stream near Sultānpur. Other versions of this same narrative make it clear that the introduction of the commissioning sākhī at this point is an interpolation.[3]

The *Purātan* and *B40* compilers, following different sources, have recorded variant versions of the same anecdote. The source used for the *B40* version was also available to the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler, a person who shared in some measure the *Purātan* concern for chronological consistency. For the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler the logical place for a commissioning sākhī was the very beginning of the janam-sākhī and accordingly the narrative which appears at such an advanced stage in the *B40* collection is recorded as the first of all anecdotes in the *Ādi Sākhīs*.[4] Nānak is first commissioned by God and only then is he given birth in order to carry out his commission. In addition to this version, however, the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler also had access to the *Purātan* version in a manuscript which recorded it in its distinctively *Purātan* place. Illogically he repeats it in this later setting[5] with the result that Nānak is twice commissioned in the *Ādi Sākhīs*. The two versions of the anecdote had diverged radically in earlier transmission and the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler evidently failed to recognize them as separate recensions derived from a common origin.

In the case of the commissioning sākhī the feature which has attracted the attention and the varying interpretations of the different compilers is

[1] *B40*, ff. 123b–126b.   [2] *Pur JS*, pp. 14–16. *GNSR*, p. 37.
[3] See below, p. 199.   [4] *AS*, pp. 1–3.   [5] *AS*, p. 16.

the theme. Elsewhere their decisions concerning placement within a sequence are evidently determined by minor references within the narrative. For the *Purātan* compiler the determinative reference in the Achal sākhī appears to have been the presence of Siddhs. Because the Achal encounter involves Siddhs the *Purātan* compiler bracketed this discourse with the other prominent confrontation with Siddhs, the discourse on Mount Sumeru.[1] For another compiler, however, an appropriate context was evidently suggested by the presence of Gurū Aṅgad in the Achal narrative. As a result the *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs* compilers, following their common source, include the discourse in the cluster of Aṅgad anecdotes.[2]

The contrast between random and ordered recording can be further illustrated by sākhīs 32–4 of the *B40* collection.[3] This cluster covers a visit to Mecca, a discourse with Kabīr, and Bābā Nānak's encounter with Rājā Śivanābh. For the *B40* compiler there is no problem in the consecutive recording of sākhīs which jump from Western Arabia to Northern India, from Northern India to an unspecified location over the sea, and from there (in sākhī 35) to Kābul. He has, moreover, already recorded a different sākhī set in Mecca.[4] Sequence did not matter. The message could be communicated without coherent chronological patterns.

For the *Purātan* compiler, however, such inconsistencies were intolerable. If Nānak was to visit Mecca then it would have to be during the course of the westwards journey, and if both Mecca sākhīs were to be included they would have to come together. The result is a conflation of the two anecdotes, recorded as a single sākhī in its appropriate place.[5] The story of Rājā Śivanābh has, in like manner, been assigned a suitable place within the total structure. Having decided that the unspecified location over the sea can only mean Sri Lanka,[6] the compiler has included the Śivanābh sākhī in his southwards journey.[7] Kabīr does not appear in the *Purātan* collection, but the *Miharbān* tradition duly puts him in his proper place.[8]

There remains the question of why some compilers should have developed an impulse to order their material into a coherent sequence. The answer is probably the simple one that whereas certain minds will readily sustain a single theme through a disarray of circumstances, others prefer to systematize. Any desire to impart a stronger impression of authenticity probably had little to do with the earlier expressions of the systematizing impulse. For seventeenth- and eighteenth-century readers and listeners the essential questions of authenticity related to the myth expounded by the janam-sākhīs rather than to the incidents which served as a means of exposition. It is only in more recent times, following the

---

[1] *Pur JS*, p. 97.
[2] *B40*, ff. 117a–122b. *AS*, pp. 73–6. The common source was the manuscript *Q2*. See below, p. 198.
[3] *B40*, ff. 133a–154a.   [4] *B40*, ff. 51b–52b.
[5] *Pur JS*, pp. 98–104. See below, pp. 137–9.   [6] *GNSR*, pp. 115–16.
[7] *Pur JS*, pp. 86–90.
[8] *Mih JS* I.154–6. The *Miharbān* discourse is not the same as the *B40* version.

spread of western historicism, that the truth of the myth has been so intimately linked to the authenticity of the incidents expressing it. This misunderstanding of the janam-sākhī method does much to explain the vehemence with which the *Purātan* chronology is defended today.

The third of the four stages in the growth of the janam-sākhī collections is distinguished by the addition of expository material to the narrative anecdotes and discourses. In a sense it is misleading to define this feature as a third stage, for it is not dependent upon a prior ordering of earlier random selections. Exegetical passages can be added to disordered collections as well as to ordered janam-sākhīs of the second stage. Indeed, it can be argued that this third stage should properly be classified as the initial stage of a distinctively exegetical form, parallel to the first stage of the narrative janam-sākhīs. It is in fact claimed that the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* is the direct product of an early oral tradition. Another work from the group which produced the earliest versions of the *Miharbān* tradition claims that the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* records homilies which Miharbān delivered to his followers during the early years of the sixteenth century. These homilies (so it is claimed) were taken down by a disciple named Keśo Dās and later recorded as the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* towards the middle of the century.[1]

This claim, even if true, does not gainsay the mature character of the extant *Miharbān* collection. *Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ*, the first portion of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, is constructed on the basis of a substantial collection of narrative sākhīs, ordered into a coherent sequence. The narrative element is generally subordinate to the exegetical purpose of the collection but it plainly precedes it in terms of development. If Keśo Dās was in fact responsible for the structure of the extant *Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ* it follows that the introduction of exegetical material must represent a third stage in the development of the janam-sākhīs. The exponents of the *Miharbān* tradition have appropriated the coherent narrative form of the second-stage janam-sākhī and used it to develop a new form. In the remaining sections of the complete *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* this chronological interest largely disappears, but only because the travel itinerary has been almost completely covered in *Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ*. In a sense it is still assumed, for the remaining discourses are all set within the context of the later Kartārpur period of the Gurū's life.

The first three phases in the formation of recorded janam-sākhīs developed rapidly. If the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*'s own account of its origins is to be believed (and there is no evident reason for doubting it), random, structured, and exegetical collections were all in existence by the middle of the seventeenth century. More than two hundred years passed before the next significant phase began. They were not, of course, sterile years. During the two intervening centuries the earlier janam-sākhīs were considerably supplemented, other distinctive traditions emerged, and individual compilers occasionally gathered all three phases into a single janam-sākhī. The two major developments during this period were a

[1] *Goṣṭān Srī Miharvān jī dīān*, quoted in *Mih JS* I, Introductory Essays, pp. 36–8.

considerable expansion of the *Miharbān* tradition and the increasing popularity of the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs.

The expansion of the *Miharbān* tradition can be safely assumed from the evident fact that the portion of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* now extant is obviously the product of sustained development over a lengthy period. The extreme rarity of *Miharbān* manuscripts indicates, however, that this development must have taken place within strictly limited confines. The ascetic emphases which find obvious favour with the *Miharbān* commentators suggest that these limited confines probably corresponded to a few *maṭhs* ('monasteries', ascetic communities). These *maṭhs* may have consisted of Udāsī sādhūs or perhaps sādhūs of the Nirmalā order.[1] Restricted circulation also seems to have been the fate of the *Purātan* tradition and likewise of the later *Gyān-ratanāvali* collection. Increasingly it was the *Bālā* tradition which found favour in the eighteenth-century Sikh community, and by the nineteenth century its dominance was almost complete.

A number of reasons may be held to account for this widespread popularity of the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs. One will presumably have been its explicit claim to represent the actual words of a disciple who had accompanied Bābā Nānak on his travels.[2] No other janam-sākhī makes this same claim, and as there was no apparent reason for questioning it the janam-sākhī which advanced the claim was the one which won acceptance.

Secondly, the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs contain much that would attract the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century believer. The strong Puranic atmosphere of much of the *Bālā* narrative will have been thoroughly congenial to the rural Pañjāb of this period, and in no other janam-sākhī is the power of Bābā Nānak the wonder-worker more magnificently displayed. The *Bālā* tradition is, in fact, a faithful reflection of many aspects of contemporary Pañjāb rural culture, with its marked fascination for Puranic legends and Sūfī hagiography. Given such qualifications it is scarcely surprising that the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs should acquire such extensive popularity.

Thirdly there is the theory, to which passing reference has already been made, that the rise of the *Bālā* tradition may reflect the rise of the Jaṭs within the Sikh community. Although this is much less certain, it must be regarded as at least a possibility. The other important janam-sākhīs reflect a stronger Khatrī influence, both in terms of authorship and of references to particular disciples of the Gurū. In contrast, the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs mark a shift towards Jaṭ participation (Bālā himself is a Sandhū Jaṭ), and it can be argued that the tradition's dominant emphases accord better with Jaṭ cultural patterns than with those of the Khatrīs.

Whatever the reasons there can be no doubt concerning the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century success of the *Bālā* tradition. This success placed it in a position of considerable advantage when the fourth phase became

---

[1] Tejā Singh, *Sikhism: Its Ideals and Institutions* (Calcutta, 1951), pp. 58–66, 71–3.

[2] *Bālā JS*, p. 3.

possible. The fourth phase began with the introduction of the printing-press to the Pañjāb. In 1871 the first lithographed Gurmukhī text appeared in Lahore, closely followed in the same year by a second. Both were *Bālā* janam-sākhīs, the second much longer than the first,[1] and since that year progressively larger *Bālā* versions have completely dominated the market. Although Vīr Singh's *Purātan Janam-sākhī* has run through several editions its sales have been greatly assisted by its regular inclusion in uni-versity syllabuses. An earlier challenge advanced by two editions of the *Gyān-ratanāvali* was soon overwhelmed, with the result that lithographed copies of the *Gyān-ratanāvali* are now very difficult to obtain. To this day the popular market is still controlled by modern versions of the *Bālā* tradition. The spread of education must eventually destroy the *Bālā* reputation, but its disappearance from Pañjāb bookshops is still many years distant.

One last point may be briefly noted before terminating this survey of the janam-sākhīs' linear development. This is the appearance of works which are not strictly janam-sākhīs, but which relate in a generally uncritical manner the accounts given in the janam-sākhīs. In some instances these accounts depend almost exclusively upon a single tradition; in others they blend a variety of traditions, normally without any acknowledgement of source.

Two works of this derived nature have been of particular importance, one of them based upon the *Bālā* tradition and the other upon *Purātan*. The first of these has already been briefly noticed. This is Santokh Singh's *Nānak Prakāś*, a work which today is little read but which for earlier generations served as a valued confirmation of the *Bālā* tradition and as a supplement to it.[2] As far as scholars and writers were concerned its decline in popularity reflected in large measure a corresponding decline in the reputation of its principal source. The *Bālā* tradition retained its popularity amongst writers until after the turn of the century and as late as 1914 could still find an ardent supporter in Khazān Singh, author of *History and Philosophy of Sikhism*. Its reputation as a primary source had, however, declined sharply during the closing years of the nineteenth century and it suffered a particularly serious blow with the publication in 1909 of the second major work deriving largely from a single janam-sākhī source. This was the first volume of Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion*, an account of the life of Nānak which diverted the attention of scholars and writers away from the increasingly discredited *Bālā* tradition to the newly discovered *Purātan* janam-sākhīs. It needed only the publication of Karam Singh's *Kattak ki Visākh* in 1913 to seal the *Bālā* fate.

Macauliffe, aided by Bhāī Kāhn Singh, established a pattern which has been generally followed ever since. The *Purātan* tradition provides the framework and much of the actual content for most subsequent bio-graphies. This means that the Gurū performs his four major journeys to the east, south, north, and west, concluding with the brief journey to Gorakh-haṭaṛī (Gor-khatrī). To this *Purātan* itinerary are added the

---

[1] See above, p. 21.   [2] See above, p. 45.

three extra incidents mentioned by Bhāī Gurdās (the visits to Medīnā, Bāghdād, and Multān) together with others which command a particular popularity. (The water-splashing anecdote set in Hardwār is a prominent example.) Bhāī Bālā, the putative narrator of the tradition bearing his name, has presented a major problem. Macauliffe, firmly loyal to his *Purātan* source, rigorously excluded him[1] but others have been unwilling to go as far.

The situation established at the turn of the century by writers such as Macauliffe and Kāhn Singh continues to this day. Those who attempt biographies of Gurū Nānak almost invariably take their stand upon *Purātan*, and sometimes produce accounts which amount to little more than simple paraphrases. It must, however, be emphasized that this fashion is still largely limited to the authors of the more sophisticated variety of biographical study. Bālā still lives on. His continuing authority is everywhere considerable and in the villages of the Pañjāb it remains unchallenged.

[1] Macauliffe, i. lxxix.

9
THE EVOLUTION OF SĀKHĪS

INCLUDED in the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs is the sad story of a merchant who lost his infant son because he failed to pay proper respect to Bābā Nānak. The child had only recently been born and the proud father was busy celebrating the event when Bābā Nānak and Mardānā arrived on the scene. Mardānā sought the usual contribution due to itinerant faqīrs, but was ignored. When he returned and reported this disrespectful negligence to his master Bābā Nānak recited the shabad *Siri Rāg Pahare* 1.

> In the first watch of the night, O my merchant friend,
>   the divine order sets you within the womb. . . .
> In the second watch of the night, O my merchant friend,
>   you wander heedlessly astray . . .
> In the third watch of the night, O my merchant friend,
>   you are seduced by wealth and carnal beauty . . .
> And in the fourth watch of the night, O my merchant friend,
>   the Reaper comes to gather your harvest . . .[1]

Next morning the child died and the two travellers moved on, leaving the merchant to bewail his fate.[2]

Although the narrator's choice of subject is not the happiest, the sākhī does at least provide a simple example of the manner in which anecdotes have been appropriated or developed in order to give expression to the basic janam-sākhī message. Gurū Nānak's own concern when composing *Siri Rāg Pahare* 1 was to stress the futility of life without the divine Name. This message he repeats in a wide variety of ways, and in this particular instance he has chosen to use mercantile imagery. The basic theme of the janam-sākhī narrators is distinctively different. The message which they repeat with the same insistence is that salvation is to be found in submission to Bābā Nānak, and the corollary which this necessarily involves is that failure to make this submission can be an invitation to disaster. To give expression to this conviction the *Colebrooke* narrator or one of his predecessors has here taken a particular constituent (a shabad by Gurū Nānak) and from it has fashioned a brief anecdote demonstrating the fate of those who spurn the Gurū.

This illustrates in the simplest possible terms the manner in which one of the major constituents described in chapter 6 can be incorporated in one of the forms outlined in chapter 7. The purpose of this chapter will be to analyse other examples of the same process, particularly those which have developed more complex patterns.

[1] *AG*, pp. 74–5.   [2] *Pur JS*, pp. 28–30. *GNSR*, p. 40.

The present chapter will be concerned with sākhīs or clusters of sākhīs rather than with individual anecdotes or discourses, and for this reason a distinction which has already been mentioned must be repeated at this point. The term 'sākhī' should not be confused with the term 'anecdote'. A sākhī in its later normative usage is simply a division of a janam-sākhī (a 'chapter'). As such it may contain only one anecdote, or it may contain several. Where a multiplicity of anecdotes or discourses occurs within a single sākhī they may be expressed in a recognizable sequence, or they may be blended to form a composite 'episode'. Occasionally a sākhī will be found to contain no anecdotes at all. This variety is well illustrated by the agglomeration of miscellaneous statements which together constitute sakhi 26a of the *B40 Janam-sākhī*.[1] This consists of the following elements:

1. A statement that Bābā Nānak commenced a course of austerities (f. 102b).
2. A description of Bābā Nānak's cell (f. 102b).
3. A reference to Bābā Nānak's custom of retaining a *rabābī* (minstrel) for regular *kīrtan* (f. 102b).
4. Bābā Nānak's custom of taking an early-morning bathe, followed by devout prostrations (f. 103a).
5. A brief, incomplete reference to an unspecified meritorious deed performed by Gurū Aṅgad (f. 103b).
6. A reference to the custom of communal dining by Bābā Nānak's disciples in his presence (f. 103b).
7. The tradition that Bābā Nānak once sustained himself during a lengthy period with nothing more than a daily handful of sand and a poisonous *ak* pod (f. 103b).
8. A declaration concerning the world-wide fame of Bābā Nānak (f. 104a).

Miscellanies of this kind are unusual, but the list does at least serve to emphasize that a sākhī is essentially a division of a janam-sākhī and not necessarily a single anecdote. This should not suggest, however, that sākhīs are mere conveniences, devoid of any meaning other than the whim of a compiler. Most sākhīs, whether the single-anecdote variety or composite amalgams, deserve to be regarded as distinct units, and it is to the emergence of these units that the present chapter will be devoted. The method to be followed will consist of individual analyses of a series of representative examples.

Example 1: Bābā Nānak's visit to Multān

Narrative anecdote: simple form, direct borrowing from current tradition

The story of Bābā Nānak's encounter with the pīrs of Multān provides a simple example of an anecdote appropriated from earlier hagiography. In this instance the source is Sūfī tradition. The Sikh version retains all of the

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 102b–104a.

details intact, altering only the identity of the central participant. Bhāī Gurdās briefly relates the story as follows:

melio bābā uṭhiā mulatāne di jārati jāi
agon pir mulatān de dudhi kaṭorā bhari lai āi
bābe kaḍhi kari bagal te chambeli dudh vichi milāi
jiu sāgar vichi gaṅg samāi

Bābā [Nānak] arose and journeyed from the [Achal] fair to Multān.
As he approached [the city] the pīrs of Multān came bringing a cup filled with milk.
Bābā [Nānak] plucked a nearby jasmine flower and laid it on the milk;
Just as the Gangā flows into the ocean![1]

As the water of the Gangā makes no evident difference to the volume of water already in the ocean, so did the jasmine make no difference to the volume of milk in the cup. Although Multān was already brim-full of pīrs there was still room for the crown and glory of them all.[2]

This particular anecdote had earlier been related in connection with 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī (A.D. 1077–1166), the founder of the Qādirī order of Sūfīs. In this early version the city was Bāghdād, the cup contained water, and the flower which Jīlānī laid on the water was a rose.[3] The Jīlānī anecdote, however, was not the actual source from which Bhāī Gurdās derived his version. Prior to its appearance in Sikh tradition the legend had travelled to India where it had come to be associated with the city of Multān. In this context it had been attached to two different people, both of them celebrated Sūfīs of the city. The earlier was Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā, the great Suhrawardī pīr who, according to Abu al-Fazl, died in A.D. 1266.[4] This version related the anecdote to Bahā' al-Dīn's arrival in Multān from Bāghdād.[5] The second appropriation was in the name of the equally famous Sūfī pīr Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī of the same period, who, according to legend, must bear the responsibility for having rendered the climate of Multān so unpleasantly hot.[6] This second version relates that when Shams al-Dīn first approached the city the symbolic cup was sent out by the incumbent Bahā' al-Dīn.[7] In both instances the cup contained milk, not water as in the case of the Jīlānī version.

[1] *BG* 1:44.
[2] The *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak* offers another version of the same anecdote. See *SLTGN(Eng)*, p. 72.
[3] J. P. Brown, *The Darvishes or Oriental Spiritualism*, ed. H. A. Rose (London, 1927), pp. 100–11.
[4] *Ā'īn* III. 363. The tradition concerning Bahā' al-Dīn's actual death also appears to have been appropriated by one of the janam-sākhī traditions. Immediately prior to his death Bahā' al-Dīn is said to have received a sealed letter from 'an aged person of grave aspect'. Ibid. One janam-sākhī tradition links the deaths of both Bahā' al-Dīn and Nānak with an anachronistic exchange of letters immediately prior to their deaths. Pur *JS*, pp. 108–10. The *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak* repeats this story, adding that Bābā Nānak subsequently received a mysterious letter which proved to be a harbinger of his death. *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 84–6.
[5] 'Abd al-Haq Muḥaddith Dihlawī, *Akhbār-al-Akhyār*, quoted by S. A. A. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Agra, 1965), p. 25n. The anecdote appears on page 27 of the 1914 edition of the *Akhbār-al-Akhyār*.
[6] Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*, vol. iii (London, 1839), pp. 116–17.
[7] Lepel H. Griffin, *The Panjab Chiefs*, vol. iii (Lahore, 1890), p. 84.

The legend is particularly well suited to the concerns of hagiography and its entry into the janam-sākhī tradition need occasion no surprise. If there is any reason for surprise it is that the legend achieved only a limited circulation within the early Sikh community. The *Purātan*, *Miharbān*, *Bālā*, *Ādi Sākhīs*, and *B40* compilers all ignore it. In the eighteenth century, however, it was retrieved first by the *Gyān-ratanāvalī* and then by the *Mahimā Prakāś*. Thereafter its popularity was assured.

The Multān anecdote is an excellent example of a *Wandersage*, in this case a story which has travelled eastwards in a Sūfī form. Another such example is the ever-popular story of how Bābā Nānak claimed to be watering his Lahore fields by splashing water from Hardwār.[1] In this instance the earlier version is to be found in Buddhist tradition.[2]

Example 2 : Mūlā the Khatrī

Narrative anecdote : simple form, evolved from quotation

The story of Mūlā the parsimonious Khatrī offers an uncomplicated example of a narrative anecdote which has developed out of a quotation from the works of Nānak. One day Bābā Nānak summoned Aṅgad to accompany him on a visit to 'a worldly fellow' named Mūlā the Khatrī.

'When I myself followed a worldly way of life this person, Mūlā the Khatrī, was my friend. If possible I should like to see him again.' And so Bābā Nānak, wearing the dress of a faqīr and accompanied by celibate *langoṭ-bands*, went and stood at the threshold of Mūlā the Khatrī's house.[3]

Mūlā's wife happened to observe the Gurū standing outside and suspecting that he had come to beg she urged her husband to conceal himself. This he did while she went out to inform Bābā Nānak that he was not at home. The Gurū was not deceived. He recited an imprecatory shalok and departed. Mūlā then emerged from his hiding-place, collapsed, and shortly afterwards died. Fortunately his companions managed to bring him to Bābā Nānak before he actually expired, and having thus beheld the Gurū (*darśan*) he died in the assurance of salvation.[4]

This brief cautionary tale has a dual origin. Its ultimate origin lies in the ascetic ideal which characterized a section of the later Sikh community and which produced several sākhīs with a distinctively austere message. Celibacy, renunciation, ascetic discipline, and respect for faqīrs are all affirmed; worldliness is proscribed. Bābā Nānak is made to fit this ideal and in a number of appropriate sākhīs is cast in the role of a celibate renunciant. The story of Mūlā the Khatrī belongs to this tradition and its earliest version is recorded within a cluster of ascetically inclined sākhīs.[5]

The story of Mūlā the Khatrī evidently developed within this tradition

[1] *B40*, ff. 76b–79a.   [2] *GNSR*, p. 90.   [3] *B40*, f. 100b.
[4] *B40*, ff. 100b–101b. *AS*, pp. 77–8. *Mih JS* II. 163–4. In all three janam-sākhīs the Mūlā anecdote is the second part of a composite sākhī. The first part is a brief description of Bābā Nānak's apparel, with specific reference to his adoption of both Hindū and Muslim customs; and a brief statement of his preaching methods. *B40*, f. 100a–b.
[5] See above, pp. 79–81 and below, pp. 203–4.

in the following manner. The ideal provided the impulse, and a pungent epigram by Gurū Nānak served as a nucleus. Out of this nucleus ingenuity fashioned a moralistic tale concerning the fate awaiting those who spurn faqīrs in general and the Supreme Faqīr in particular. The epigram providing the second element of the anecdote's dual origin is a couplet by Gurū Nānak which in the Ādi Granth appears as *Surplus Shaloks* 21.

> *nāli kirāṛā dosti eve kare guāu*
> *maraṇu na jāpī mūliā āvai kitai ṭhāi*

> They who fraternize with merchants squander their affection.
> Foolish one! None knows whence Death shall come.[1]

The key features of the couplet are the vocative form *mūliā*, the noun *kirāṛā*, and the mention made in the second line of the unpredictable nature of death. Although the word *mūlā* can be used as a proper name[2] the context provided by the shalok as a whole indicates that in this instance the literal meaning, 'O sad one' or 'O foolish one', is intended. The reference to *kirāṛā(n)* has been similarly misconstrued. In its literal sense the word means 'shopkeepers' or 'traders' and has been specifically applied in a somewhat pejorative sense to Khatrīs and Aroṛās. Within the context of the shalok it refers to those who 'trade' in worldly ambitions rather than in the things of God, providing thereby another example of Nānak's fondness for mercantile imagery. It has, however, been construed in a literal sense, the somewhat strained interpretation being that all traders are condemned because of one particular *kirāṛ* named Mūlā.

An anecdote has then been evolved to explain the condemnation and the result is the story of Mūlā the deceitful trader who out of niggardliness concealed himself when warned of the Gurū's approach. The second line of the couplet suggests his punishment. Bābā Nānank departs and Mūlā, overcome with shame, collapses and dies.[3] In the course of the narrative Mūlā is sometimes referred to as a *kirāṛ* and sometimes as a Khatrī. The latter designation presumably derives from the assumption that in a trader or shopkeeper disciple would have been a Khatrī by caste.[4]

In the case of the Mūlā anecdote there has been a general acceptance of the janam-sākhī narrator's misinterpretation of Gurū Nānak's shalok. This is not invariably the case with all anecdotes which relate to specific references in the works of Nānak. An example of divergence is provided

---

[1] *B40*, f. 101a. The Ādi Granth version reads:
   nāli kirāṛā dostī kūṛai kūṛī pāi
   maraṇu na jāpai mūliā āvai kithai thāi
                              AG, p. 1412.

[2] Bhāī Gurdās refers to a disciple of Gurū Nānak named Mūlā the Kīṛ. (*BG* XI:13.) Although Kīṛ is the name of a Khatrī sub-caste Bhāī Gurdās is not referring to Mūlā the Khatrī of janam-sākhī fame. Unlike Mūlā the Khatrī, the Mūlā of whom Bhāī Gurdās makes mention is said to have been a loyal disciple, and in the *Nānak Prakāś* the two Mūlās are treated separately. *NPr* II. 38, 42. Another Mūlā, also a Khatrī, was Mūlā Choṇā, the father-in-law of Gurū Nānak.

[3] A later version of the tradition attributes his death to snake-bite. *NPr* II. 38 (69).

[4] In the area around Pakho and Kartārpur (the locality in which the story probably evolved) *kirāṛ* was normally identified with Khatrīs rather than with Aroṛās. *Census of India 1891*, vol. xix (Calcutta, 1892), p. 290.

by the vocative form *ve lālo*, 'O beloved', which recurs in the shabad *Tilaṅg* 5.[1] The earliest janam-sākhī treatment of this shabad ignores these words and instead directs all attention to its Mughal references. For the janam-sākhī narrators the major event of the Mughal invasions was the sack of Saidpur and so the shabad takes its place within the sākhī describing this event.[2] In the *Bālā* tradition, however, the two words have been picked up and attached to another anecdote, thereby transforming it into a tale concerning a poor carpenter of Saidpur called Lālo.[3] The *Miharbān* tradition also notes the reference, but claims that the word *lālo* is an affirmative particle used by Paṭhāns.[4]

Example 3: Sajjaṇ/Bholā the Robber

Variant narrative anecdotes: simple, evolved from a common quotation

The anecdotes which have been developed out of Gurū Nānak's shabad *Sūhī* 3 are of interest for two reasons. First, they illustrate, like the preceding example, how the theme of a shabad, aided by a striking reference in its text, can prompt a narrative anecdote. Secondly, they demonstrate the manner in which a single extract from the works of Nānak can generate more than one distinct story. *Sūhī* 3 begins:

> Bronze shines brightly, but if I rub bronze it sheds an inky black.
> Though I scour it a hundred times polishing will never remove its stain.[5]

The theme of this hymn is the fate which must ineluctably overtake hypocrites and dissemblers, those who are outwardly pious but inwardly evil. This message evidently proved irresistible to the early community, for there emerged from its treatment of the shabad three distinct anecdotes with several variant forms, all describing pious rogues and all employing a recitation of *Sūhī* 3 as the means of exposing their pretences. In the *Ādi Sākhīs* the story concerns a man called Sajjaṇ, the name being derived from the word *sajaṇ* or 'friend' which Gurū Nānak uses to introduce the refrain of the shabad. The pious Sajjaṇ sits dressed in white, rosary in hand, devoutly repeating 'Rām, Rām' and dispensing water to all who pass. Bābā Nānak's recitation of *Sūhī* 3 converts him and he confesses to having murdered unsuspecting guests.[6] The *Purātan* manuscripts offer one variant of this story, the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* a second, and the *Gyān-ratanāvalī* a third. In the *Purātan* and *Gyān-ratanāvalī* versions Sajjaṇ is said to be a *ṭhag* and is located in North India.[7] The *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* adheres more closely to the *Ādi Sākhīs* version and though much expanded is evidently derived directly from it.[8]

---

[1] *AG*, pp. 722–3.   [2] *B40*, ff. 66b–67a. *AS*, p. 53. *Pur JS*, p. 59.
[3] *Bālā JS*, pp. 88–9. *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 75–6. *GNSR*, pp. 86–7. See above, p. 87, n. 3.
[4] *Mih JS* I. 463.   [5] *AG*, p. 729.   [6] *AS*, pp. 31–3.
[7] *Pur JS*, pp. 21–2. *GR*, p. 207. The latter names Hastināpur as the location. The former merely indicates a place visited by Bābā Nānak prior to his arrival in Delhi.
[8] *Mih JS* I. 235–8.
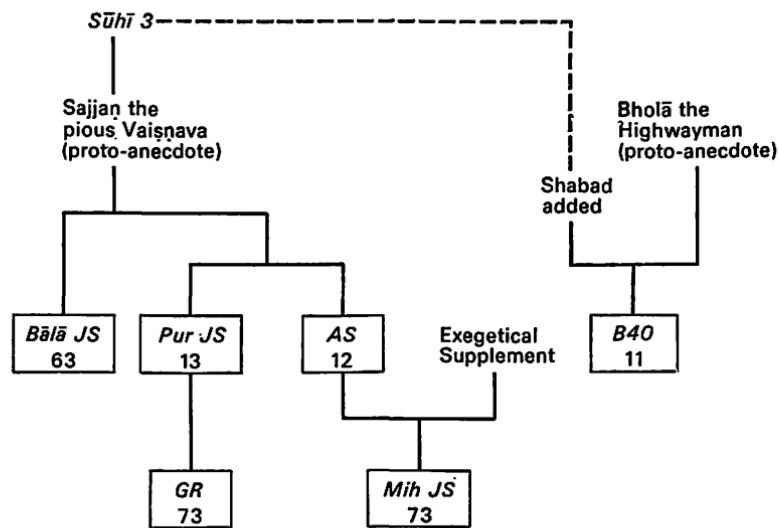
Figure 1

The *Bālā* version also concerns a hypocrite called Sajjaṇ, but portrays him as a rascally Vaiṣṇava who steals clothes.[1] This provides a second distinct tradition, and the *B40 Janam-sākhī* supplies a third. In the *B40* story yet another kind of thief appears. This time it is a highwayman named Bholā, and in the quotation of the shabad Gurū Nānak is said to have used the word *bholā*, or 'heedless one', instead of *sajaṇ*.[2]

The first two of these versions must have evolved out of the shabad, for there can be no other explanation to account for the key part which its recitation plays in the two stories. Only in the case of the *B40* version can we doubt the validity of this explanation. In this third case the story related by the janam-sākhī possesses a unity which is in no way dependent upon the shabad. A more likely explanation of the shabad's appearance in the *B40* version is that it was subsequently appended to an existing anecdote because its theme seemed to consort well with the theme of the anecdote.

The shabad *Sūhī* 3 has thus stimulated two separate stories and in addition has found a third place in the janam-sākhī traditions through incorporation within yet another tale. These anecdotes in their various versions may be diagrammatically represented as in figure 1.

One collection incorporates both the dominant Sajjaṇ version and also the Bholā anecdote. This is the so-called *Prāchīn Janam-sākhī*. The Sajjaṇ story is a part of the collection's *Purātan* foundation; and the Bholā

---

[1] *Bālā JS*, pp. 290–4. Although the Vaiṣṇava identity links the *Bālā* figure directly with the white-garmented rogue of the *Ādi Sākhīs* tradition, the two narratives diverge considerably.

[2] *B40*, f. 43a.

anecdote appears as one of the supplementary sākhīs added to this nucleus.[1]

Example 4: The Rich Man's Pennants
Narrative anecdotes: simple, composite sākhī

Once an anecdote had begun to circulate within a janam-sākhī tradition several developments could follow. Occasionally a tale might retain its primitive structure, economy of detail, and isolation from other stories. Such immunity from expansive impulses was however rare. The general trend was towards a greater measure of complexity in structure, together with various supplements of additional detail. This development was normal in recorded versions as well as for oral tradition and commonly the process operated with considerable speed.

The more important of the features which characterize the process of anecdote expansion are as follows:

1. Anecdotes become longer and more diversified in structure. This results from:

    (a) Extra detail
    (b) Combination with other anecdotes or portions of anecdotes.
2. Quotations from the works of Gurū Nānak are added.
3. Personal details are added
    (names of participants, their occupations, details of dress and appearance, etc.).
4. Specific locations are added.
5. Sākhīs are arranged in chronological order according to locations.
    (4 and 5 are commonly simultaneous processes.)
6. The more striking details (including miracles) tend to become exaggerated.
7. Anachronisms become more numerous.
8. Passages serving an apologetic or pedagogical purpose are added.

Although these eight features are rarely to be found within a single sākhī they are all common and the later janam-sākhīs provide an abundance of examples. All eight can be illustrated by comparing two extant versions of the anecdote 'The Rich Man's Pennants'. This tale has been recorded in a relatively primitive form by the *B40* compiler from a source which appears to have been the oral tradition of his area.[2] A much more developed version is to be found in the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs (both *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād*), and from a comparison of the *B40* and *Purātan* narratives it can at once be seen how the proto-anecdote has developed within a particular tradition.

The *B40* version is as follows:

The Rich Man's Pennants

Bābā Nānak left that place and appeared in another country. In the city to which he had come four pennants were fluttering aloft. Bābā Nānak asked what kind of

---

[1] Sevā Singh Sevak, *Prāchīn Janam-sākhī* (Jalandhar, 1969), pp. 27–33, 250–1.

[2] See *B40(Eng)*, Introduction, pp. 12–13, 22.

pennants they were and the people replied, 'There is a wealthy money-lender here. He has four coffers containing a large hoard of treasure and to signify this he flies four pennants over them.'

Bābā Nānak went to the money-lender and asked him, 'Shāh, what kind of pennants are these which have been hoisted up there?'

'Those pennants will accompany me after my death,' replied the money-lender.

Bābā Nānak then gave the money-lender a needle and said, 'Brother Shāh, keep this needle safe. I shall ask you to return it in heaven.' Having said this he arose and departed.

Later the money-lender began to worry. 'How can I take this needle with me when I die?' he asked himself. 'And how can I deliver it to that faqīr in heaven? I shall be put to shame.'

He arose and ran after Bābā Nānak, and after running more than two *kos* he caught up with him. Prostrating himself he said, 'Take back your needle. There is no point in my keeping it.'

'Shāh,' replied Bābā Nānak, 'if there is no point in keeping this needle of mine, then how can these four treasure-chests accompany you when you die?'.

Then the portals of the money-lender's understanding opened. Error was swept away! Joining his hands in supplication he stood before Bābā Nānak and begged for forgiveness. Bābā Nānak was overjoyed.

The money-lender then returned, gave away all his possessions, and applied himself to the threefold discipline of repeating the divine Name, giving charity, and regular bathing. He became a Sikh and found happiness. The transmigratory round of death and rebirth was broken, for the grace of the supreme Sādhū had come upon him. He had found happiness![1]

This simple version should be compared with the *Purātan* narrative, which here follows the *Hāfizābād* version. The *Colebrooke* version differs only slightly.

A.   The Gurū then proceeded to Lahore on the River Rāvī. The karorī of the *pargana* of Lahore was Dūnī Chand, a Dhuppaṛ Khatrī. His father's *srāddh* was being held when he heard that Nānak the Ascetic had arrived. He went and reverently brought Bābā Nānak to his house. Bābā Nānak went in and sat down, and Dūnī Chand ordered milk, curd, and wood to be brought in from outside. When everything was ready he fed the Brāhmaṇs who had been invited for the *srāddh* ceremony.

Bābā Nānak was also invited and when he arrived he asked, 'What are you celebrating?'.

'It is my father's *srāddh*,' he replied. 'I have fed Brāhmaṇs in his name.'

'It is now the third day since your father had food,' said Bābā Nānak, 'and you say "I have fed a hundred Brāhmaṇs".'

'Where is he?' asked Dūnī Chand.

'He is lying under a *mal* tree, five *kos* away,' replied Bābā Nānak. 'He has been reborn as a wolf. But take food and go without fear. When he recognizes you his human intelligence will return. He will eat the food and speak with you.'

Dūnī Chand took food and went to the wolf. He prostrated himself, set down the food, and asked, 'Father, why have you been incarnated thus?'

The wolf replied, 'I was the disciple of a man who was scrupulous in the observance of his duties. It so happened that he had left a fish near me. When the

[1] *B40*, ff. 189a–190a.

hour of my death arrived I was suffering and the fish was stewing beside me. Its smell assailed me and I desired it. As a result I received this incarnation.'

The wolf arose and fled. Dūnī Chand returned and prostrated himself before the Gurū.

B. Dūnī Chand then took the Gurū to his home. Over his door were seven pennants, each representing a lakh of rupees. 'Whose are these pennants?' the Gurū inquired, to which Dūnī Chand replied, 'These pennants are mine.' Bābā Nānak then gave him a needle and said, 'Keep it safe for me. I shall ask for it in the hereafter.'

Dūnī Chand took the needle to his wife and said, 'Keep this needle. The Gurū gave it to me saying, "I shall ask for it in the hereafter." '

'Good God!' exclaimed his wife. 'Will this needle accompany you to the hereafter?'

'What can I do?' asked Dūnī Chand.

'Go and give it back,' answered his wife.

Dūnī Chand took the needle back to Bābā Nānak and said, 'This needle will not go with me into the hereafter. Please take it back.'

'If a needle cannot get there,' replied the Gurū, 'how will these pennants get there?'

Dūnī Chand bowed before him and said, 'Give me that which will go into the hereafter.'

'Give in God's Name,' answered the Gurū. 'Feed ascetics (*atit*) and wandering holy men (*abhiāgat*), for it is in this manner that your wealth will be carried into the hereafter.'

Dūnī Chand distributed the seven lakhs of rupees symbolized by the pennants. He obeyed the command. The Gurū's command is such that whoever obeys it finds salvation. Dūnī Chand became a Name-believing disciple (*naudhariku sikh*) and began repeating 'Gurū, Gurū'. Bābā Nānak then said, 'Mardānā, play the rabāb" Mardānā played the rabāb.

[There follows a quotation from *Vār Āsā*]

The *vār* is to be completed later. Utter: 'Praise to the Gurū!'[1]

The eight features noted above are illustrated by the *Purātan* narrative in the following manner:

1. (a) The rich man's wife is introduced.
    (b) The anecdote B which in the *B40 Janam-sākhī* stands alone has been linked to an entirely separate anecdote A concerning a man who wasted money on futile ceremonies.
2. A quotation from *Vār Āsā* has been added.
3. The rich man has been named Dūnī Chand, his sub-caste is given as Dhuppaṛ Khatrī, and he is said to have been a government official of high rank (*karoṛi*)
4. The composite sākhī is set in 'Lahore on the river Rāvi'. (The *B40* compiler has also specified a location, namely the town of Gujrāt. This he does only in his table of contents.[2] The actual sākhī includes no such reference.)

---

[1] M. A. Macauliffe (ed.), *Janam Sākhī Bābe Nānak Jī kī* (Rāwalpiṇḍī, 1885), pp. 175–9. *Pur JS*, pp. 70–1. The quotation from *Vār Āsā* consists of *pauṛī* 10 with shaloks. *AG*, p. 468.

[2] *B40*, f. 228b (Arabic pagination).

5. The sākhī is set within the context of a tour of the Pañjāb which, according to the distinctive *Purātan* chronology, followed Bābā Nānak's return from his first major journey. The previous sākhī is set in a place near Pasrūr, approximately fifty miles from Lahore.[1] The narrator responsible for the *Purātan* sequence then brings the Gurū down to Lahore and the Rāvī river. Two unlocated sākhīs follow and the *Hāfizābād* compiler then introduces another incident on the banks of the Rāvī.[2]

6. The rich man has graduated from the status of a mere money-lender to that of a high government official; and the four pennants of the *B40* version have become seven. Each of these *Purātan* pennants represents a lakh of rupees instead of a coffer of treasure.

7. The rich man is anachronistically described as a karoṛī. The title was instituted by Akbar after the death of Nānak.

8. Two distinctive beliefs are given direct and emphatic expression in the *Purātan* version.

   (a) The authority of the Gurū: 'The Gurū's command is such that whoever obeys it finds salvation.' The *Colebrooke* version also adds as an explanation for the fate of Dūnī Chand's reincarnated father: 'I received this incarnation because I was without the perfected Gurū.'[3]

   (b) The ascetic ideal, and, specifically, deference to ascetics: 'Give in God's Name. Feed ascetics and wandering holy men, for it is in this manner that your wealth will be carried into the hereafter.'[4] At the beginning of the sākhī the Gurū is referred to as 'Nānak Tapā', Nanak the Ascetic.

Three concluding points may be noted. The first is that the relatively sophisticated commentators and redactors of the *Miharbān* tradition sometimes reverse the normal process in the case of miracles, excising rather than multiplying. In other respects, however, they follow the general pattern, commonly to a degree which far outstrips all other traditions.[5] Secondly, the *Purātan* version of the anecdote discussed above, although appreciably more developed than that of the *B40 Janam-sākhī*, is nevertheless still essentially primitive. It has not attained the measure of complexity which distinguishes a highly evolved version. Thirdly, it should be stressed that evolved products are not necessarily later in terms of time than more primitive analogues. The *B40* version of 'The Rich Man's Pennants' was drawn from an oral tradition and recorded approximately one hundred years after the *Purātan* version emerged in its present form.

[1] Sākhī 36. *Pur JS*, p. 66.
[2] Sākhī 40. Ibid., p. 73.
[3] Ibid., p. 71.
[4] Macauliffe's rendering of this sentence illustrates the arbitrary manner in which he altered his janam-sākhī material in order to bring it into accord with the known beliefs and teachings of Gurū Nānak. 'Give some of thy wealth in God's name, feed the poor, and thy wealth shall accompany thee.' Macauliffe, i. 130.
[5] The *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* does not include the anecdote discussed in this example.

Example 5: Bābā Nānak returns to Talvaṇḍī
Narrative discourse: simple, combined with narrative anecdote

Most janam-sākhīs include in their accounts of how Bābā Nānak returned home after his travels a discourse based upon the shabad *Siri Rāg* 7.[1] Having greeted him, his mother and later his father seek to divert him from his chosen path of itinerant sanctity. *Siri Rāg* 7 is unusually well suited to the construction of a discourse, and the result as it appears in the *B40*, *Ādi Sākhīs*, *Purātan*, and *Miharbān* collections is one of the most consistent examples of this form that the janam-sākhīs can offer.[2]

The theme of the shabad is self-denial and the choice is accordingly an appropriate one for the narrator's purpose. Gurū Nānak opens it with the following stanza and refrain:

> To believe in the divine Name is to taste all sweet flavours;
>   to hear it all the salty.
> To utter the divine Name is to taste all tart flavours;
>   to sing it all the spicy.
> In single-minded love of the Name lie the thirty-six delectable flavours, but
>   only he can love like this upon whom falls the gracious glance of the Lord. 1.
> Bābā, to eat any other food would be to turn joy into suffering.
> He who eats it brings agony to his body and liberates evil
>   within his *man*.   *Refrain*

The narrator's task is an easy one. The vocative *bābā* is changed to *mātā* ('Mother, to eat . . .') and from the amended quotation has been fashioned the following introductory narrative:

> His mother laid the sweets and clothing before him and said, 'Eat, my son.'
> 'I am already filled,' replied Bābā Nānak.
> 'How can you have eaten your fill in this wasteland, my son?' asked his mother.
> 'Mardānā, play the measure *Siri Rāg* on the rabāb,' commanded Bābā Nānak.
> Mardānā played *Siri Rāg* and Bābā Nānak sang a shabad . . .[3]

This narrative is then followed by stanza 1 and the amended refrain.

The second stanza continues the same kind of imagery, so characteristic of Gurū Nānak's style.

> Let the crimson which you wear be a steeping of your *man* in God, and let your
>   white be the giving of charity.
> Let your blue be the removal of the stain of falsehood and meditation the
>   garment which you put on.
> I have bound around myself the sash of spiritual contentment. Thy Name,
>   O Lord, is all my wealth and all my joy.   2.
> Bābā, to wear other garments would be to turn joy into suffering.
> He who arrays himself in any other brings agony to his body and liberates evil
>   within his *man*.   *Refrain*

Given this answer the narrator frames another suitable comment to precede it.

---

[1] *AG*, pp. 16–17.
[2] *B40*, ff. 34b–36a. *AS*, pp. 46–7. *Pur JS*, pp. 50–1. *Mih JS* 1.476–8.   [3] *B40*, f. 34b.

After he had concluded the first stanza his mother said, 'Remove that faqīr's robe and put on these new clothes.' Bābā Nānak then sang the second stanza . . .[1]

The Gurū's mother then withdraws and his father offers him a mare. An offer of this kind might, under the circumstances, have seemed incongruous, but not when one observes that the third stanza refers to horses and riding equipment.[2] In this manner a narrative discourse of the standard comment-and-answer variety is constructed. The quotations from *Sirī Rāg* 7 provide ready-made answers for Bābā Nānak to utter, and on the basis of this given material the narrator devises suitable comments or questions for the interlocutors. Bābā Nānak's fourth stanza clinches the issue, and the discourse is brought to a rapid close.

The discourse which has thus been developed represents the dominant janam-sākhī usage of *Sirī Rāg* 7. It is not however the only one. *Sirī Rāg* 7 is of interest not merely because it has prompted a narrative discourse of unusual consistency, but also because within a different tradition it has been applied to an entirely different set of imaginary circumstances. The pattern outlined above belongs to the tradition which will later be designated *Narrative I*.[3] In contrast to this *Narrative I* product the *Bālā* tradition has developed from the same shabad a discourse set in the village of Pakho, with Mūlā Choṇā and Ajittā Randhāvā cast in the role of inter-locutors. The actual questions inevitably correspond to a considerable degree, for both sets have been derived from the same given text. It is the setting devised for the discourse which differs and the difference is at once striking. In the *Bālā* version it is Mūlā Choṇā who offers the food and clothing, and Ajittā Randhāvā who offers the mare.[4]

The gap between the two traditions widens still further when later compilers link their *Sirī Rāg* 7 discourse with other anecdotes. In the dominant *Narrative I* tradition a partnership is formed with Bābā Nānak's homecoming sākhī, an anecdote which in the *Bālā* tradition is completely divorced from the *Sirī Rāg* 7 discourse. At an early stage the shabad *Vaḍahaṃsa* 1 has been added to the composite sākhī, and somewhat later a *Purātan* compiler has appended two more shabads, *Sūhī Chhant* 4 and *Mārū* 1.[5] Later still *Miharbān* commentators have added a shalok from *Vār Sāraṅg*, the shabads *Sirī Rāg* 4 and *Mārū* 5, extra details, and the usual quantity of *Miharbān* exegesis.[6] The *Bālā* compiler, on the other hand, has preserved the isolation of his *Sirī Rāg* 7 discourse. To the homecoming anecdote he has added an apocryphal shabad in the *Rāmkalī* measure and linked to it an episode concerning Rāi Bulār, the landlord of Talvaṇḍī.[7]

The various traditions have thus used a common shabad and a common anecdote in differing ways. The patterns of expansion and their relation-ship may be represented as in figure 2.

---

[1] *B40*, f. 35a.
[2] Because the interlocutor is now Nānak's father the vocative *bābā* can be retained.
[3] See below, pp. 181–5. [4] *Bālā JS*, sākhī 70, pp. 312–14.
[5] *Pur JS*, pp. 49, 51. *AG*, pp. 557, 765, 989.
[6] *Mih JS* 1.475, 479–81, 482–4. *AG*, pp. 1243, 15, 990. [7] *Bālā JS*, sākhī 22, pp. 93–9.

Return to
Talvaṇḍī

Sirī Rāg 7

Discourse
with Rāi
Bulār

Works of
Nānak

Vaḍahaṃsa 1

Bālā JS
70

Works of
Nānak

Works of
Nānak

B40
8

AS
16

Exegesis

Bālā JS
22

Pur JS
31

Mih JS
141–5
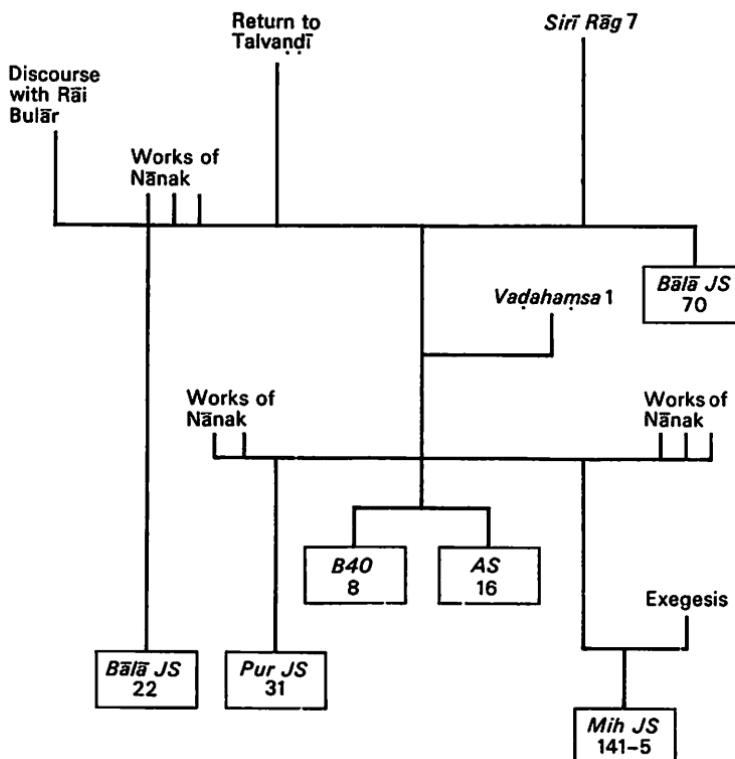
Figure 2

The five sākhīs so far discussed are all examples of relatively un-complicated processes. Each includes either one or two anecdotes, and where two occur they are linked by means of simple juxtaposition. For various reasons they have proved resistant to incorporation within sākhīs of a more complex character. Although many anecdotes have preserved this measure of isolation, such simplicity of form and structure is by no means an invariable rule. Many other anecdotes obviously lost their independence very quickly. Instead of remaining isolated and subject in terms of sequence to the discretion of later compilers they were soon associated with other anecdotes and transmitted in an assimilated form. This process is particularly common in the case of anecdotes relating to the same person, place, incident, or theme.

In some instances various anecdotes associated in this manner have been blended to form a single composite sākhī. The earlier versions of these composite sākhīs normally betray clear indications of their diverse origins, but in the course of transmission the sharp divisions are blurred and a

greater measure of unity is achieved. One or perhaps two anecdotes normally provide a focus for the composite sākhī, and these central anecdotes almost always survive any excising tendencies to which later narrators may occasionally be prone. Others of marginal significance to the central theme may drop away, although the general tendency favours expansion of a received tradition rather than contraction.

Three useful examples of this blending process are provided by the sākhīs set in Pāk Paṭṭan, Mecca, and Achal. In the first of these (example 6) the focus is a particular person, namely Sheikh Braham (Sheikh Ibrāhīm). This is a first step, and no more than a first step, in the movement away from simplicity. Although this sākhī in its various versions is more complex than any of the examples already discussed it was not a complexity which imposed serious demands upon the ingenuity of any janam-sākhī narrator. The measure of coherence sustained by the narrators in this lengthy sākhī was already implicit in the selection of quotations which provide a basis for the discourse.

A more subtle blend is demonstrated by the evolved Mecca sākhī (example 7). In this instance the factor primarily responsible for drawing together a number of separate anecdotes was their common setting, with a common theme aiding the process. In the case of the composite Achal sākhī (example 8 *inter alia*) the common theme provided the dominant impulse, with a common location serving a subsidiary role.

An even more impressive example of narrative skill and the blending of several anecdotes is to be found in the Rājā Śivanābh sākhī (example 9). This is the more impressive because it lacks the obvious focus provided by a common person, place, incident, or theme. The sākhī in its evolved form possesses a measure of unity which does much to obscure the multiplicity of its antecedents.

In all of these instances the end product in the more evolved janam-sākhīs has been a single sākhī. This is the general rule, but not an invariable one. In a few cases anecdotes with a common focus have retained their essential distinctions and instead of merging in a single, integrated sākhī have been transmitted as a cluster. This process is illustrated by the various anecdotes concerning Gurū Aṅgad which appear in the narrative janam-sākhīs (example 10). In even fewer cases the result is neither a composite sākhī nor a cluster, but a recurrent reappearance within well-defined circumstances of a person who serves a distinctive function. This feature is illustrated in the last of the examples by the person of Mardānā the Bard (example 11).

Example 6: Bābā Nānak's discourse with Sheikh Braham
Narrative discourse and exegetical supplements: complex composite sākhī

A series of shaloks attributed to Sheikh Farīd have prompted a narrative discourse of unusual length and consistency. Although in this instance the germinal passages are not actually by Gurū Nānak the process which has

operated upon them is the same. Quotations from the works of Gurū Nānak have subsequently been added in order to extend the discourse. Later versions contain more of these extra quotations, together with appropriate questions to introduce them, and the *Miharbān* treatment is distinguished by its customary fund of exegetical material.

The sākhī begins in all versions with an account of how Bābā Nānak once visited Pāk Paṭṭan,[1] the town in which was situated the Sūfī *khānqāh* established in the thirteenth century by the celebrated Sheikh Farīd-al-Dīn Masʿūd Ganj-i-Shakar. There he held discourse with Sheikh Braham, a successor of Farīd. Sheikh Braham may be safely identified with Sheikh Ibrāhīm (born A.D. 1450), the twelfth successor of Farīd.[2] Because Nānak and Sheikh Ibrāhīm were contemporaries and because Pāk Paṭṭan lay within easy reach of the Pañjāb a meeting between the two must be regarded as at least a possibility. It should not, however, be inferred that any such meeting was directly responsible for the genesis of the sākhī entitled 'Bābā Nānak's Discourse with Sheikh Braham'. Its genesis is to be found not in this incident, if in fact it took place, but rather in a small group of shaloks bearing the name of Farīd.

Shaloks attributed to Sheikh Farīd had long been current in the Pañjāb and a selection had been included by Gurū Arjan in the Ādi Granth.[3] Several of these shaloks were cast in an interlocutory form and were for this reason admirably suited to inclusion within the pattern of a dialogue. The original Farīd had died in 1265, and although the janam-sākhīs of the *Purātan* tradition do include a sākhī relating an encounter with the first Farīd[4] the more sophisticated narrators would have recognized this as an impossibility. It so happened, however, that Sheikh Ibrāhīm, the contemporary of Gurū Nānak, was commonly known as Farīd Sānī, or 'Farīd the Second'. This may mean that the shaloks bearing the name of Farīd were in fact the work of Farīd Sānī, or it may merely have suggested to the janam-sākhī narrators that this was the case.[5] For reasons sound or mistaken the identification with Farīd Sānī, or Sheikh Ibrāhīm, was certainly assumed. The interlocutory tone of the shaloks implied discourse and from this there evidently followed the belief that the discourse which provided their original context was a conversation between Bābā Nānak and his contemporary Sheikh Ibrāhīm, erroneously called Sheikh Braham.

This process may have been encouraged by a tradition that Gurū Nānak had once visited Pāk Paṭṭan, and it is possible that such a tradition could

---

[1] Multān District, now in Pakistan.

[2] Lajwanti Rama Krishna, *Panjabi Sufi Poets* (Calcutta, 1938), p. 1.

[3] *AG*, pp. 1377–84.

[4] *Pur JS*, pp. 40–5. This sākhī illustrates the same process. It owes its origin partly to shaloks attributed to Farīd (only one of which is in the Ādi Granth), to two shabads attributed to Farīd in the Ādi Granth, and to shabads of Gurū Nānak. In this case, however, other processes have also operated. Some of the shabads have been added later, and earlier legends associated with Farīd have been worked into the discourse.

[5] W. H. McLeod, 'The Influence of Islam upon the Thought of Gurū Nānak', in *Sikhism and Indian Society* (Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, vol. iv, Simla, 1967), pp. 296–7.

have derived from an actual incident. Even if no such tradition existed prior to the development of the discourse Pāk Paṭṭan would have been the obvious choice of location for the evolving discourse. In either case it is of secondary importance. For the actual origin and the substance of the discourse attention must be directed to the verses which were currently in circulation and which are now embedded in the sākhī. Both origin and substance are to be found in the Farīd shaloks, together with a few compositions by Gurū Nānak which seemed to accord with the occasion and with the tenor of the discourse. Four of the Farīd shaloks are included in the Ādi Granth collection. Two are extra-canonical.

With the solitary exception of Bhāī Gurdās all the important janam-sākhī traditions relate versions of this narrative discourse.[1] There are many minor variants in style and, as usual, the material progressively expands as the line of transmission grows longer. There can, however, be no doubt that all are based upon a common proto-discourse. This proto-discourse was formed by the addition of connecting passages of dialogue to the core provided by the verses. A visit to Pāk Paṭṭan provided an appropriate setting and the proto-discourse was then complete. Extra verses with related dialogue were later added, and later still we have the inevitable introduction of lengthy expository passages in the *Miharbān* version of the tradition.

If the analysis is confined to the *Colebrooke, Hāfizābād,* and *B40* janam-sākhīs the process may be diagrammatically illustrated as in figure 3. *Q1* represents a hypothetical manuscript which, for reasons to be discussed later, must have been used by the compilers of the *Hāfizābād* and *B40* janam-sākhīs.[2] Although in general the anecdotes recorded by this manuscript must have been briefer than their *Colebrooke* analogues, the Sheikh Braham discourse provides an instance of a *Q1* sākhī which is slightly more expanded than the corresponding *Colebrooke* version. An extra shalok (*Vār Malār* 23:1) which must have been added by the compiler of *Q1* appears in both *Hāfizābād* and *B40*, thereby distinguishing them from *Colebrooke*.

The pattern becomes a little more complicated when the *Ādi Sākhīs* version is introduced into the comparison. This version lacks the extra shalok and in consequence resembles the *Colebrooke* analogue rather than those of *Hāfizābād* or *B40*. The resemblance does not, however, amount to complete identity, and when other anecdotes common to all four collections are added to the comparison it becomes clear that the *Ādi Sākhīs* connection with *Hāfizābād* and *B40* is actually closer than its connection with *Colebrooke*. The introduction of the additional anecdotes also shows that the *Hāfizābād* compiler used not only *Q1* but also *Colebrooke*, or a manuscript very close to it. The pattern which now emerges is as shown in figure 4.

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 57b–65b. *Pur JS*, pp. 52–6. *AS*, pp. 47–52. *Mih JS* I.488–510. *Bala JS*, pp. 360–77. *GR*, pp. 58–89, 509–10. *LDP 194*, ff. 45a–74a *passim*. (This portion of the manuscript includes some extraneous material.)

[2] See below, p. 191.

Narrative   *Discourse*
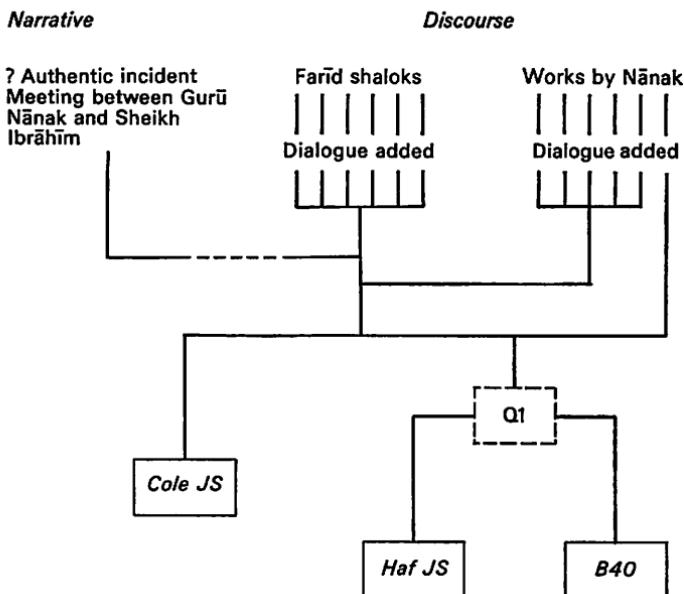
Figure 3

Further complications are introduced when the *Miharbān* version of the discourse is compared with the four represented above.[1] Although the *Miharbān* version includes all the quotations given by *Hāfizābād* and *B40* it cannot be assumed that any of the *Miharbān* redactors had access to *Q1*. The earliest *Miharbān* collection appears to predate *Q1*. To this original collection extra quotations were added, one of them the shalok which distinguishes *Hāfizābād* and *B40*. In addition to the extra quotations lengthy passages of exegesis were also introduced, thereby converting the original anecdote into three consecutive didactic discourses of the typical *Miharbān* variety.

This much is predictable for it merely illustrates the standard pattern of *Miharbān* growth. Less typical is the fact that some of the expanded *Miharbān* material has found its way into the *B40* version of the discourse. The *B40* version adds to the *Q1* text an extra quotation and five exegetical passages which can only have come from a *Miharbān* source.[2] A comparison with the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* confirms this, and also indicates that the *Miharbān* version utilized by the *B40* compiler was a recension earlier than the extant text.

---

[1] *Mih JS* I.488–508.

[2] The extra quotation is *Sirī Rāg* 33 (first stanza and refrain, part of second stanza and second refrain). *B40*, ff. 64a, 64b. The exegetical passages follow the quotations given on folios 60a–63a.

Narrative   *Discourse*
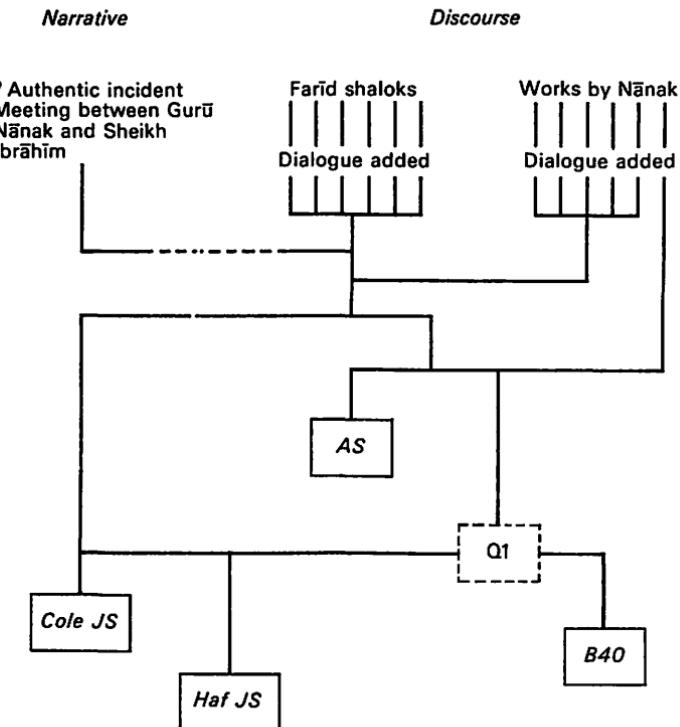
Figure 4

The addition of the *Miharbān* version of the discourse produces the extended pattern shown in figure 5.

Even this is not the full measure of the complexity, for the diagram omits the *Bālā, Gyān-ratanāvalī,* and *LDP 194* versions. It does, however, represent the principal components of the complete pattern, together with a sufficient indication of the growth process which has operated in all versions of the discourse.

Example 7 : Bābā Nānak's visit to Mecca

Narrative anecdotes with subsidiary discourses and exegetical supplements: complex composite sākhī

Few janam-sākhī anecdotes can equal in popularity the tales concerning Bābā Nānak's visit to Mecca and Medīnā. The latter city is not mentioned in all versions, but in every janam-sākhī which is more than a mere fragment there is to be found an account of a journey to Mecca. The story is a particularly popular one, both because of its dramatic interest and for the function which it performs. There are, in fact, several distinct anecdotes
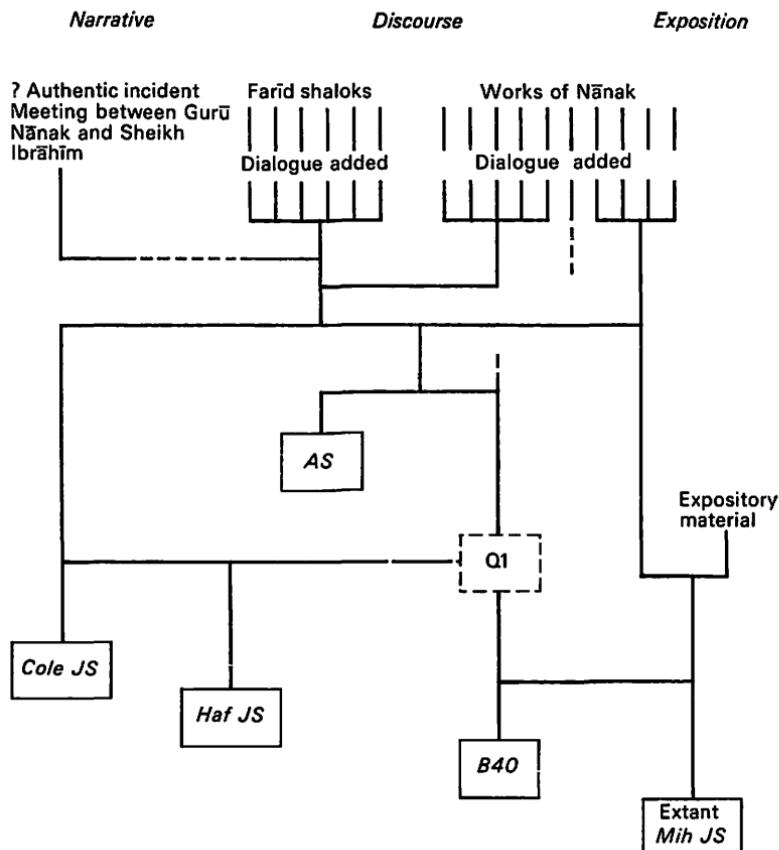
Figure 5

which the janam-sākhīs set in Mecca and which later compilers combine within single sākhīs. All have a common theme, through which they fulfil a common function. The common theme, the triumph of Bābā Nānak over Islam, is represented in three different ways corresponding to three original anecdotes.

There is, first, the entry of a Hindu into the forbidden city. The janam-sākhīs stress Nānak's identity as a Hindu, contrasting this with the insistence of various Muslims that no Hindu can ever enter the city. With divine assistance the impossible is achieved, thereby proclaiming the sanction of God upon the work of Nānak and the unique power which he possessed as a result of his divine commission.[1]

[1] Concerning the proscription of unbelievers from entering Mecca see the Qur'ān 9:28-9 and Reuben Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 3. It has been suggested that

The same claim is expressed through the other two episodes which have descended from individual anecdotes to the composite Mecca sākhī of the later versions. The *miharāb* which moves as Nānak's feet are dragged round by an irate qāzī obviously moves in response to divine intervention, thereby confounding the representative of Islam and proclaiming once again the seal of divine authority upon Nānak. Even the *qibla* moves in response to the position occupied by Bābā Nānak. This claim, which evidently follows Sūfī precedents, is here applied to one who patently stood outside the bounds of Islam. Less spectacular but equally emphatic in making the same point is the religious discussion which, in its many different versions, Nānak is said to have held with qāzīs, mullahs, pīrs, and pilgrims in Mecca. The principal interlocutor in this discourse, and occasionally the only one, is said to have been the Sūfī Sheikh Rukn al-Din.

In these three anecdotes it may be seen how closely allied are the purpose and the function of the janam-sākhīs. All three attribute to Nānak an authority which is divine, unique, and invincible, an authority which is set in successful conflict with another claimant to the same titles in the same period and within the same geographical area. Such a claim demands a common loyalty from all who own Nānak as Master. At the same time it offers the assurance of divine approval upon the chosen Master and a corresponding assurance of salvation to those who follow him. In this manner it assists the efforts of the emergent Nānak-panthī community towards a distinctive identity, and at all subsequent stages of the community's development serves to strengthen its cohesion.

The common theme of these three episodes soon led to amalgamation in a single Mecca sākhī. The fact that the three anecdotes originally existed as separate expressions of the common theme is made clear by the testimony of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* and by an analysis of the single composite sākhīs which we find in the later versions. Amalgamation did not, however, follow a common pattern in all traditions, and in order to understand its various permutations the different traditions must be treated separately. In figure 6 an attempt is made to represent the distinctive *Purātan* pattern.[1]

As the diagram indicates, the three episodes which are combined in the

Narrative   *Discourse*

Figure 6

single *Purātan* sākhī are still separate in the *B40 Janam-sākhī*.[1] This at once suggests that although the *B40* collection was actually compiled after the formation of the *Purātan* tradition its versions of the three anecdotes represent in each case an early stage in the evolution of the later sākhī. Such an assumption would indeed be correct, but it should not be carried to the point of concluding that any of the three represents an original version. An analysis of the *B40* analogues will show that they are themselves the product of a period of development and that none of them can be regarded as an accurate representation of a proto-anecdote. They are of interest merely as identifiable stages in the process which eventually produced the composite *Purātan* sākhī. In one instance it is evident that the *B40* compiler has used a source to which the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler also had access (a hypothetical manuscript designated *Q2*).[2]

Although the *B40* analogues are thus to be regarded as more primitive than the *Purātan* sākhī it would be a mistake to assume that the three anecdotes as they appear in the *B40 Janam-sākhī* should all be placed at the same stage of development. The *B40* versions of 'The Miraculous Arrival' and 'The Moving *Miharāb*' are earlier products than the same manuscript's version of the Rukn al-Dīn discourse. The Rukn al-Dīn encounter, as it appears in the *B40* collection, embodies the kind of heterodox discourse (in this case the so-called *Tih Sipāre*) which marks a later stage than the two wonder-stories. For this reason the *B40* sākhīs have been set at differing points in the diagram. The moving *miharāb* anecdote, lacking any scriptural supplements, has been represented as a second-stage product; the miraculous arrival anecdote, with its supplementary shabad, has been set at stage III; and the discourse has been aligned with stage IV. It should be emphasized that in this diagrammatic form these stages are intended to represent no more than highly simplified steps in what can commonly be a complex pattern of development.

From these three stages it is possible to work back to stage I archetypes. The story of 'The Journey to Mecca' is, in its *B40* form, very brief and simple, but to it has been added a shabad which will not have been a part of the earliest version of the tradition. There appears to be no reason to doubt that the proto-anecdote must have closely resembled the *B40* version without its attached shabad.

The *B40* account of 'The Moving *Miharāb*' is similarly primitive, and although it too has been supplemented the extra material is not a scriptural quotation. The voice from the cupola pronouncing a blessing upon Nānak is evidently a version of the highly popular 'Divine Voice' which in hagiographical traditions is a stock method of expressing divine sanction or approval.[3] Because this element appears in no other version it can be assumed that it was not a part of the proto-anecdote.

---

[1] *B40* sākhīs 14, 15, and 32, ff. 51b–55b, 133a–135a. Although the *B40* compiler has recorded two of the anecdotes consecutively, he has taken all three from different sources. See below, p. 230–1.

[2] See below, p. 198.

[3] A common variant is the 'Voice from the Tomb' communicating guidance from a deceased saint or from the Prophet Muhammad himself. Rukn al-Dīn is said to have indicated his final resting-place in this manner. *ASI* v. 133.

It seems likely that the location in Mecca represents another such addition. Had the proto-anecdote been set in Mecca it is most unlikely that the moving object would have been a *miharāb*. It is only outside Mecca that *miharābs* acquire their special significance as indicators of the *qibla* or direction of the Ka'bah. If the original anecdote had been set in Mecca the focus of the incident would almost certainly have been the Ka'bah itself, a conclusion which is strongly supported by the fact that the *Miharbān* version locates the incident in a village on the way to Mecca[1] and by the *Bālā* retelling of the same story in a Medīnā context.[2] A *Purātan* statement to the effect that Bābā Nānak's feet were pointing 'towards Mecca'[3] appears to be a remnant of the earlier location which the later narrator has failed to eliminate. The common theme linking 'The Moving *Miharāb*' and the 'Journey to Mecca' anecdotes, together with the heightened effect achieved by setting the incident at the geographical centre of Islam, presumably account for the change of setting. From this stage it is only a short step to a combining of the two tales within a single narrative.

The encounter with Rukn al-Dīn which constitutes the third of the contributory sub-sākhīs is of a different nature. The anecdote is not a simple wonder-story. It is a heterodox discourse of the kind which appears later in the janam-sākhī traditions. This particular example does not compare in length or complexity with most discourses of this kind, nor with the variety of didactic discourse which figures so prominently in the *Miharbān* tradition. Although it represents a form later than that of the two narrative anecdotes with which it has been linked it is less developed than most *Miharbān* discourses and for this reason has been treated as an example of fourth-stage development.

The remaining elements in the *Purātan* version of the Mecca sākhī have been added to one of these three primary elements, or perhaps to the single sākhī which has resulted from the blending of the three. It seems clear that some of the extra shabads must have been attached to the 'Journey to Mecca' anecdote in its earlier separated version and that others were added to the independent tale of the 'The Moving *Miharāb*'. There can be no doubt that the cloud magically following the pilgrims belongs to the former, and Pīr Patlīā is evidently a later contribution to the Rukn al-Dīn discourse. The point at which the two remaining elements were introduced is not altogether clear, although it seems likely that they represent the latest of all contributions to the final *Purātan* synthesis. One of them, the description of Bābā Nānak's apparel, is evidently a fragment which having developed in isolation came to be attached to the Mecca sākhī, perhaps as a result of a brief reference to dress which Bhāī Gurdās uses to introduce his version of the episode.[4]

---

[1] *Mih JS* 1.449.
[2] *Bālā JS*, p. 188. The *Bālā* narrator evidently appreciated the incongruence of a *miharāb* in the Mecca setting. In its place he substitutes variously 'the gate of Mecca' or simply 'Mecca'. Ibid., pp. 184–5.
[3] *Pr JS*, p. 100.   [4] *BG* 1:32.

Narrative   Discourse
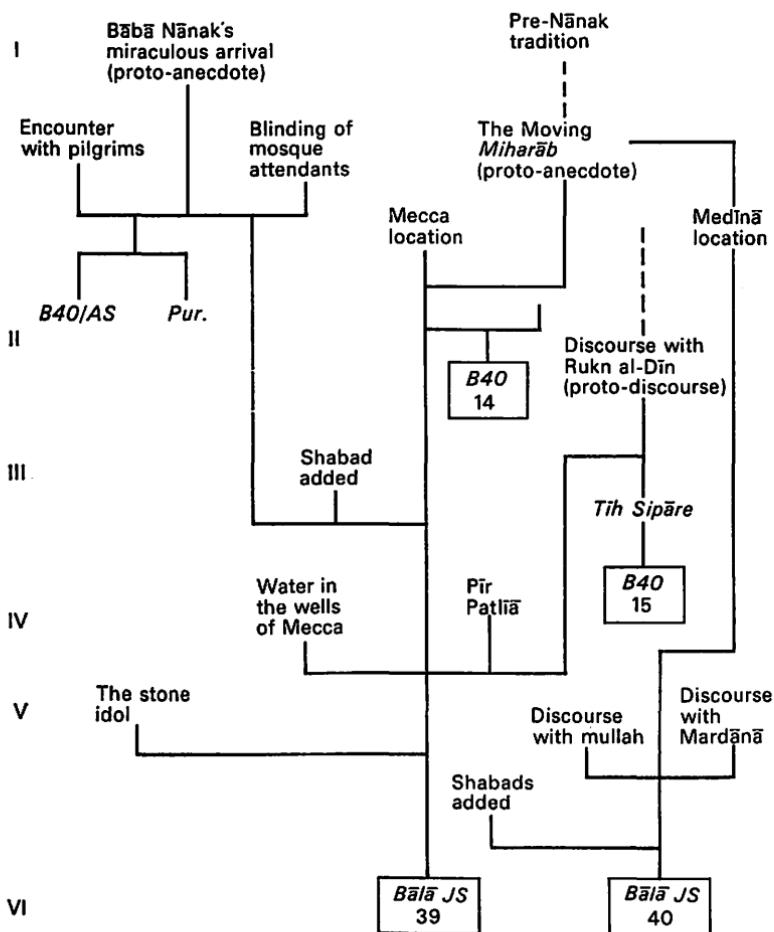
Figure 7

The mention of water springing in the wells of Mecca may possibly be a borrowing from the *Bālā* tradition.

The *Bālā* tradition provides a somewhat different pattern.[1] It embodies the same three constituents as the *Purātan* version, but the content of each betrays evident differences, particularly in the case of the 'Journey to Mecca' portion and the 'Discourse with Rukandīn'.[2] The first of these

---

[1] *Bālā JS*, pp. 182–94.   [2] The *Purātan* texts refer to Rukn al-Dīn as Rukandīn.

is so distinctively different from both the *B40* and the *Purātan* versions that we must assume only a remote connection with the proto-anecdote. The *B40* and *Purātan* encounter with pilgrims is dropped, leaving only the account of Nānak's miraculous transportation common to all three accounts. To this has been added a story of how mosque attendants who refused entry to the city were struck blind. Another distinctive addition is the description of a Hindu idol which, to his astonishment, Mardānā discovered in Mecca. This seems to be an appreciably later introduction, one which consorts ill with the remainder of the material and which serves only to disrupt the plot.

An interesting feature of the *Bālā* use of its sources is a second appearance of 'The Moving *Miharāb*' anecdote. In its second telling it does not feature a *miharāb* but instead the tomb of Muhammad in Medīnā.[1] There can, however, be no doubt concerning its identity and origin, for in all other significant details the two stories correspond.[2] To this tradition other elements are added and the result is the *Bālā* 'Visit to Medīnā' sākhī.

In spite of their numerous variants the *Purātan* and *Bālā* versions of the Mecca sākhī bear a general resemblance to each other. The *Miharbān* version, however, is distinctively different.[3] It has already been noted how almost the entire range of the *Miharbān* material diverges from that of the *Purātan*, *Bālā*, and other janam-sākhī traditions. The *Miharbān* treatment of its Mecca sources serves to illustrate the features which typically account for this difference. There is, first, the greater sophistication of the *Miharbān* narrators, a quality which prompts them to eliminate elements which strain their credulity. Secondly, there is a strong tendency to clarify points by introducing extra details. Thirdly, there is the customary *Miharbān* practice of providing lengthy exegetical supplements.

These are predictable differences, features which are generally characteristic of the *Miharbān* method. In this particular instance additional differences may be observed. The *Miharbān* account of the Mecca visit is also distinguished by the omission of one of the three sākhīs used by both *Purātan* and *Bālā*, and by a shift of emphasis in its treatment of the two which it retains. The 'Discourse with Rukandin' is dropped altogether and 'The Moving *Miharāb*' is deprived of the primary importance accorded it by the *Purātan* and *Bālā* versions. In its place the 'Miraculous Arrival' anecdote is moved to the centre, with much greater attention paid to the encounter with the Mecca pilgrims. The *Miharbān* narrators could resist wonder-stories with a firmness wholly uncongenial to *Purātan* and *Bālā*, and at least one of them evidently appreciated that the 'Triumph over Islam' theme would be best served by the story of Bābā Nānak's encounter with the pilgrims.

In its *Miharbān* context 'The Moving *Miharāb*' anecdote contributes no more than a minor episode expressed in a much mutilated form. The

---

[1] *Bālā JS*, sākhī 40, pp. 188–94.

[2] A minor difference is that Bhāī Bālā joins Bābā Nānak in sleeping with his feet towards the tomb.

[3] *Mih JS* I.449–61. *GNSR*, pp. 60–1.

Narrative   *Discourse*   *Exposition*

Pre-Nānak
tradition

I   Bābā Nānak's   The Moving
     miraculous arrival *Miharāb*
     (proto-anecdote)   (proto-anecdote)

Encounter
with pilgrims

                Shabads
                added

Discourse with   Sojourn in a   Discourses with God:
mullah: shabad   village: shabad   shabads and
                  and exposition   exposition

Names of
pilgrims added

                                      Mih JS
VII   135–7
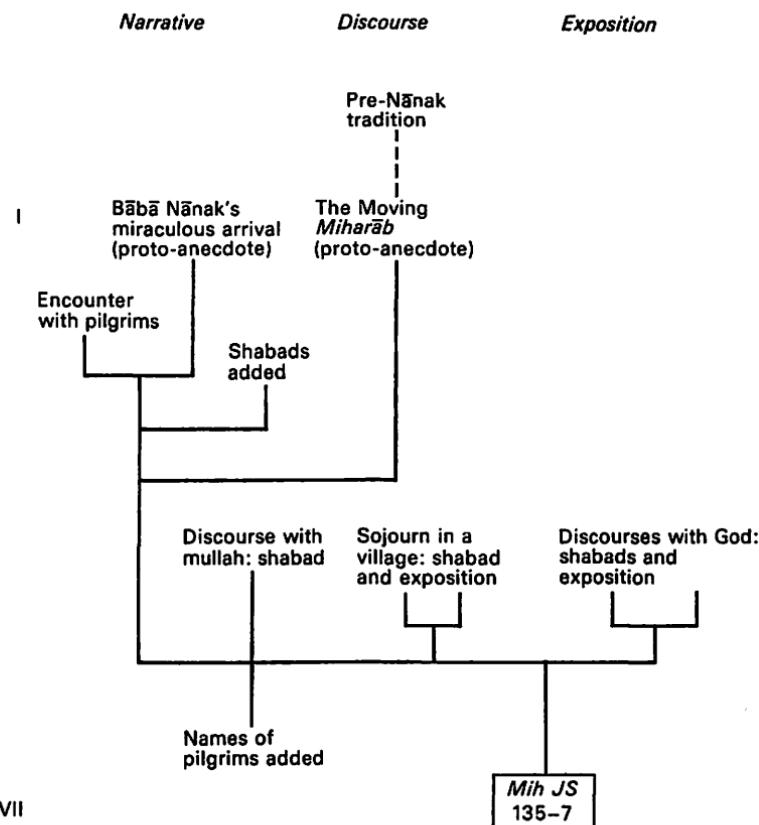
Figure 8

miharāb is replaced by a reference to the Ka'bah, and its miraculous move-
ment is, in characteristic *Miharbān* fashion, eliminated.[1] In one respect,
however, this version seems to be nearer to the proto-anecdote. As we
have already noted, the *Miharbān* narrator does not set the incident in
Mecca.

An even more significant shift of emphasis is produced by the introduc-
tion of expository material. It is this feature which particularly dis-
tinguishes the *Miharbān* treatment in this as in almost all *Miharbān*
material. The radical nature of the shift is illustrated in figure 8 by the

---

[1] It is, however, clear that the extant *Miharbān* version is based on a source which does relate
the miraculous moving of the *miharāb*. This is made clear by the words, attributed to Bābā Nānak:
'Turn my shoes in that direction where the House of the Lord will not go. Place my shoes in that
direction where the Ka'bah is not.' *Mih JS* I.449.

central line which begins in *Narrative* and moves sharply through *Discourse* into *Exposition*. To this central line, representing the 'Triumph Over Islam' theme, are subsequently added two discourses with God, neither of which possesses any intrinsic connection with the theme. Both have been added simply because the shabads which they expound suggest Muslim associations.[1] This leads well beyond the stage reached by the *Purātan* and *Bālā* versions, and to this advanced stage the number VII has been arbitrarily attached.

Yet another diagram could be constructed on the basis of the extant *Gyān-ratanāvali* treatment of the Mecca sākhī.[2] This would indicate an affinity with the *Purātan* and *Bālā* patterns, as opposed to that of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, but would involve extra detail and a further extension of the central line, an extension which would be both horizontal and vertical. The horizontal extension would not travel as far into the area of *Exposition* as the corresponding line for the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, but it would nevertheless enter it. Although these discourses with their attendant expository passages are assimilated to the narrative line with rather more concern for the plot than is to be found in the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, they do nevertheless disrupt it wherever they occur. One such conversation, although avowedly related to Bhāī Gurdās's statement concerning Bābā Nānak's apparel, evokes echoes of the *B40* 'Discourse concerning True Renunciation'.[3] Additional interlocutors are introduced (notably Sheikh Bahāuddīn); the 'Water in the Wells' episode is both rationalized and enlarged; and the *Bālā* idol becomes a *śiva-liṅga*.[4]

Finally we may note an example of relatively advanced development which yet retains a primary emphasis upon the narrative element. This is provided by an addendum recorded in a later hand on spare folios at the end of the *B40* manuscript.[5] The version is of particular interest in that it includes the story of the qāzī's filly, an anecdote which most other janam-sākhīs incorporate in a composite sākhī describing Bābā Nānak's experiences in Sultānpur.[6] It is also distinguished by the introduction of an associated Medīnā episode, one which differs from that of the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs.

Example 8: Discourses with Nāths

Narrative discourses with narrative anecdotes added: complex composite sākhīs with common theme

In the section dealing with the constituents of the janam-sākhīs particular stress was laid upon the influence of Puranic and Nāth traditions.[7] The cosmology of the Purāṇas, everywhere assumed, commonly appears in an explicit form. Echoes of Puranic legends can be distinguished in many

---

[1] A *Miharbān* commentator has also transferred the shabad *Basant Hiṇḍol aṣṭ.* 8 from its earlier Mecca setting (*B40*, ff. 134a–135a) to the context of the discourse with God (*MihJS* i.453). This was evidently done because the shabad is so plainly addressed to God.

[2] *GR*, pp. 405–19.   [3] *B40*, ff. 205b–206b. *GR*, pp. 406–7.   [4] *GR*, pp. 405, 417.

[5] See *B40(Eng)*, Introduction, pp. 8–11   [6] *B40*, ff. 21b–22b.   [7] See above, pp. 65–70.

janam-sākhī anecdotes and a few of the more important Puranic figures make occasional appearances (particularly in the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs). References to Nāth Masters are even more common. Gorakhnāth figures in numerous discourses and in some of these anecdotes lesser Nāths also play key roles. The degree of prominence given to these legends plainly indicates that the Purāṇas and Nāth tradition must have exercised a considerable influence upon the rural Pañjāb of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In the case of the Purāṇas, as with the Epics, this was to be expected and to this day the folklore and beliefs of the Pañjāb are shot through with Puranic influence. The measure of the Nāths' hold on the imagination of rural Pañjāb is perhaps a little more surprising, for it no longer applies to nearly the same extent today. It is evident that the influence which still lingers must be a remnant of something much more powerful. The part played by Gorakhnāth in the janam-sākhī traditions reflects a substantial reputation, one which is surpassed only by a few distinguished disciples of Bābā Nānak. Anecdotes in which he or other Nāths appear also imply a considerable awe, and although Bābā Nānak invariably overcomes them he sometimes has to contend with an impressively fearsome display of magical powers. The Nāth yogīs who wandered through sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Pañjāb must have been held in some dread by the people for their alleged possession of such powers. They must have commanded both fear and a grudging respect, for asceticism of the Nāth order cannot go entirely unrecognized.

Strictly speaking Puranic and Nāth influences are two separate elements. In practice, however, the two were extensively confused by the common people who received and transmitted the legends. The Nāth yogīs themselves confused the two, grafting many of their distinctive traditions on to selected portions of the luxuriant Puranic growth. This confusion was further aggravated by a merging of the terms 'Nāth' and 'Siddh'. The latter properly relates to tantric Buddhism, and although the tradition of the nine immortal Nāths must have owed much to the earlier legends concerning the eighty-four immortal Siddhs the two should, in theory, be distinguished. The actual fact was, however, much more significant than the theory, and the fact was that the Nāth Masters and the Siddh Āchāryas were inextricably confused in the popular imagination.

This confusion is entirely characteristic of the janam-sākhī usage of legendary materials. It is on Mount Sumeru, the centre of the Puranic cosmological system, that Bābā Nānak is said to have held his longest discourse with Gorakhnāth and other Siddhs. In this, as in so many other respects, the janam-sākhīs plainly mirror the understanding of their own place and time. The amalgam of Puranic, Nāth, and earlier tantric legends must have exercised an enormous influence upon the rural understandings of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Pañjāb.

This is not, however, the full extent of the janam-sākhī pattern. In the janam-sākhī treatment of these legendary materials a third element enters the amalgam. The influence of the Nāth yogīs is evident not only in the

janam-sākhīs, but also in the works of Gurū Nānak himself. In his compositions he makes extensive use of Nāth concepts and terminology, and many of them are obviously addressed directly to a Nāth audience. This could not fail to impress the janam-sākhī narrators and inevitably these Nāth-directed compositions came to be linked with the traditions received from earlier sources. The characteristic janam-sākhī pattern is accordingly an amalgam of Puranic legend, Nāth legend, and evocative references from the works of Gurū Nānak.

Two locations command a particular popularity as settings for the janam-sākhī narratives which incorporate these influences, and others of lesser appeal are also used. Mount Sumeru and Achal are the two primary sites. Of these Mount Sumeru is certainly derived from the Purāṇas, and although Achal has been identified with a Nāth centre near the town of Baṭālā it is at least possible that its real origins are, like those of Sumeru, to be found in legend rather than in a factual location. The identification with a particular place in the Pañjāb may have come later, perhaps as a result of a tradition concerning an actual confrontation between Bābā Nānak and some Nāth yogīs at the site near Baṭālā.[1]

Other settings for discourses with Siddhs (or Nāths) are Ṭillā,[2] Gor-khatrī (which invariably appears in the janam-sākhīs as Gorakh-haṭarī),[3] Gorakh-matā,[4] Setu-bandha Rāmesvaram,[5] and a remote spot set 'in the midst of the sea'.[6] Occasionally Gorakhnāth comes to Kartārpur for a meeting with Nānak.[7] The first two of these locations deserve to be added to the list of primary janam-sākhī sites. Ṭillā, in Jhelum District, has for centuries ranked as the leading Nāth centre in the Pañjāb and one of the most important of all Nāth strongholds. In this sense there can be no doubt concerning its primacy. Gor-khatrī, near Peshāwar, did not possess the same status for the Nāths, but it was a place of some importance for Hindu pilgrimage and in the janam-sākhīs it receives as much attention as Ṭillā.[8]

---

[1] For a discussion of the identification of Achal with the site near Baṭālā see *B40(Eng)*, p. 132n
[2] *B40*, f. 182a. *Bālā JS*, p. 308. *Mih JS* I.469.
[3] *Pur JS*, p. 104. *Mih JS* I.416.
[4] *GR*, p. 407. The place is later referred to as Nānakmatā. *Pur JS*, p. 27. *GNSR*, p. 85.
[5] *Bālā JS*, p. 282.   [6] *Pur JS*, p. 84.
[7] *B40*, ff. 106b–107a. *Pur JS*, p. 107. Kartārpur is not always specified, but is indicated by the context.
[8] Gor-khatrī ('the tomb of the Khatrī', sometimes Kor-khatrī) is situated in the old city of Peshāwar. Bābur, having failed to locate the spot in 1505, returned to the area in 1519 and was able to pay the visit he had cherished for so long. He was, however, disappointed.

'Marching on next day, we reached Bīgrām and went to see Gūr-khattrī. This is a smallish abode, after the fashion of a hermitage (*ṣauma'at*), rather confined and dark. After entering at the door and going down a few steps, one must lie full length to get beyond. There is no getting in without a lamp. All round near the building there is let lie an enormous quantity of hair of the head and beard which men have shaved off there. There are a great many retreats (*ḥujra*) near Gūr-khattrī like those of a rest-house or a college. In the year own we came into Kābul (910 A.H.) and over-ran Kohāt, Bannū and the plain we made an excursion to Bīgrām, saw its great tree and were consumed with regret at not seeing Gūr-khattrī, but it does not seem a place to regret not-seeing.' (A. S. Beveridge (trans.), *The Bābur-nāma in English*, vol. 1 (London, 1921), p. 394).

Each of these four locations has been used as a setting for at least one important discourse. There is general agreement amongst the various janam-sākhīs as far as the Mount Sumeru discourse is concerned, but marked divergences appear in the anecdotes set in Achal, Ṭillā, and Gor-khatrī. Although much of the material is common to the principal janam-sākhīs (including both narrative details and quotations from the works of Nānak) they disagree in the settings used for the different incidents and compositions. In general there is correspondence as far as Bhāī Gurdās, the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, the *Ādi Sākhīs*, and the *B40 Janam-sākhī* are concerned. This cluster must, however, be clearly distinguished from the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs and, with even greater sharpness, from the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs. The primary distinctions will later be seen to relate to recognizable traditions and, in some instances, to identifiable sources used by more than one janam-sākhī compiler.[1]

An effort will now be made to disentangle some of the strands which constitute this particular portion of the janam-sākhī web, and having done so to reintegrate them in a composite diagram representing all the major traditions. The principal emphasis will be upon the various versions of the Achal discourse, with only brief analyses provided for the Sumeru, Ṭillā, and Gor-khatrī traditions.

The Achal discourse has been selected for detailed analysis because it is one of the most illuminating episodes in the entire range of janam-sākhī traditions. Almost all the important issues arising from the evolution of the janam-sākhīs can be illustrated by reference to this particular sākhī. It combines narrative with discourse, and in some versions adds exegesis. Portions can be traced to earlier narrative traditions and others have obviously been developed out of references in the works of Nānak. Some quotations have been incorporated for this reason and others because they seemed to accord with the theme of the sākhī. The exegesis relates in part to the manifest intention of Nānak and in part to the doctrinal predilections of a narrator. Legendary details abound, but the actual location may perhaps be traceable to an authentic incident in the life of the Gurū. Earlier versions have been used by later compilers and the mode of expansion can be clearly traced in the latter. This is a substantial catalogue

---

See also ibid., p. 230. Abu al-Fazl reports a visit to Gor-khatrī by Akbar (H. Beveridge, trans., *The Akbarnāma*, III.528) and in the *Ā'īn-i-Akbarī* refers to it as 'a shrine greatly venerated . . . visited by people especially jogis from distant parts'. *Ā'īn* II.404. Jahāngīr also visited the spot, and like his great-grandfather was greatly disappointed by what he found. A. Rogers and H. Beveridge, *Tūzuk-i-Jahāngīrī*, I.102. A. H. Dani traces the history of Gor-khatrī back to a Buddhist foundation of the early Kushan period. *Idem, Peshawar the Historic City of the Frontier* (Peshawar, 1969), pp. 36–7, 171–3. See also A. Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India* (Calcutta, 1924), p. 93; S. M. Jaffar, *Peshawar Past and Present* (Peshawar, 1946), p. 74; and *GTC* i. 679. Gor-khatrī has been transformed into Gorakh-haṭaṛī by means of an interesting process of transmutation. The initial consonant of *khatrī* has been assimilated to *gor*, leaving a residual *h*; and the dental *t* and alveolar *r* have both been changed to retroflexes (*ṭ* and *ṛ*). 'The tomb of the Khatrī' has thus become 'the shop of Gorakhnāth'.

[1] This issue is discussed in chapter 10.

of qualifications for a single sākhī, one which attaches to it an unusual interest and importance.[1]

The analysis of this material concerns three principal elements, one of them basic and two of considerable subsidiary importance. The basic element is provided by the reputation of the Nāth yogīs and the influence of their legends. The two subsidiary elements are the influence of Puranic legend and the works of Nānak. Elsewhere either of these elements may be of primary importance. Within this particular area however both are subordinate to the dominant Nāth influence.

The simplest of the traditions to analyse and also the latest to evolve is that of the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs. This can be briefly outlined and then disregarded, for it had no evident influence upon the later evolution of the other traditions. The primary analysis must concern the other important janam-sākhīs. In the case of the *Bālā* version of the Sumeru discourse the most distinctive feature is the substantial quantity of Puranic material which has been added to the episode. No other janam-sākhī can match the range of Puranic borrowings utilized by the *Bālā* tradition to construct a mountaineering itinerary for Bābā Nānak. In order to reach Mount Sumeru Bābā Nānak climbs four legendary mountains many hundreds of miles high and having performed this feat he proceeds to ascend nine more (including Mount Kailās, which in this context is strictly legendary as it provides a setting for a discourse with Dhrū Bhagat).[2] Indeed, it would be legitimate to regard the Puranic material as basic in this particular tradition, were it not for the fact that the core around which it all clusters remains the Sumeru discourse with Gorakhnāth and his colleagues. This discourse, as in all other traditions, blends a Puranic location (Mount Sumeru) with a Nāth audience (Gorakhnāth and others) and a content drawn from the works of Guru Nānak (*Vār Rāmkalī*, shaloks 2–7 of stanza 12).[3]

The Ṭillā and Achal sākhīs offered by the *Bālā* tradition are both brief narratives, curiously remote from the other older traditions. The former relates a discourse with Bālgundāī, *mahant* of the Ṭillā *maṭh*;[4] and the latter another of the many discourses with Gorakhnāth, accompanied on this occasion by Bharatharī.[5] It is possible that the setting may derive from an actual visit to the Baṭālā area by Bābā Nānak, but the content of the *Bālā* sākhī, which includes an apocryphal composition, must be traced to other antecedents.

The *Bālā* pattern for these three sākhīs may now be represented as in figure 9. This is a relatively simple pattern. Simplicity of structure should not, of course, be confused with brevity. Apart from the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, with all its exegetical supplements, the *Bālā* versions are, in sum total, much the longest.

---

[1] The episode also provides another example of the manner in which Macauliffe conflated his material without indicating either his sources for various details or his reasons for setting the discourse at a particular point in his chronology. Macauliffe, i. 157–63.

[2] *Bālā JS*, sākhīs 43–59, pp. 200–79.

[3] *AG*, pp. 952–3. *GNSR*, pp. 11–12, 119–22.

[4] *Bālā JS*, sākhī 69, pp. 308–11.

[5] Ibid., sākhī 62, pp. 287–8.

A greater intricacy is encountered in the *Purātan* tradition. The *Purātan* version of the Sumeru sākhī is, in itself, simpler than the amplified *Bālā* version, but with it has been linked the *Purātan* Achal sākhī.[1]
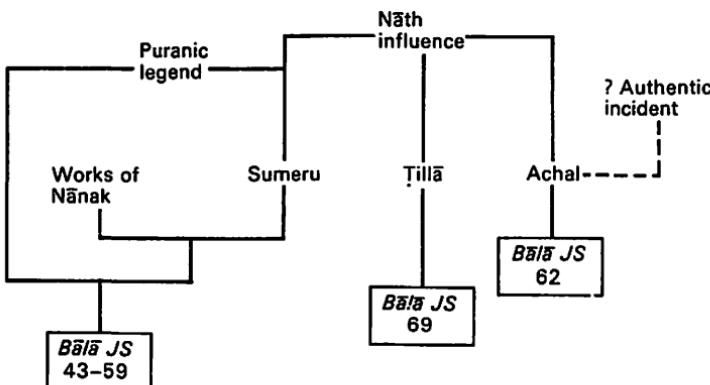
Figure 9

The two have been bracketed in a single sākhī for the apparent reason that they concern similar themes, the gap being bridged by one of Nānak's instantaneous journeys from one locality to another. In this *Purātan* version Achal produces only a minor anecdote. Bābā Nānak is offered an intoxicating drink by the assembled Nāths and in response recites his *Āsā* 38.[2] This shabad employs the intoxication produced by liquor as an image representing divine intoxication, and specifies raw sugar (*guṛ*) and the *dhāvā* or *mahūā* blossom as two of the constituents. In the *Purātan* narrative these are the constituents said to have been used by the Nāths and it is at once plain that the brief anecdote derives from the references in the shabad.

The Gorakh-haṭaṛī (Gor-khatrī) episode of the *Purātan* tradition is a more substantial anecdote.[3] Inevitably the composition by Gurū Nānak entitled *Siddh Goṣṭ*[4] found its way into the janam-sākhīs, and inevitably it was set in the context of a discourse with Siddhs (or Nāths). The actual context selected by the *Purātan* tradition is this Gorakh-haṭaṛī discourse. Following a recitation of Nānak's lengthy composition the Siddhs demonstrate their powers by making deerskins fly, stones move, and walls walk. Bābā Nānak replies by reciting *Vār Mājh*, shalok 1 of stanza 19, a brief work which proclaims the futility of both magic and extreme asceticism.[5] The Siddhs acknowledge defeat and the sākhī concludes with a recitation by Bābā Nānak of Gurū Arjan's *Gauṛī aṣṭapadī* 4.[6]

---

[1] *Pur JS*, sākhī 50, pp. 94–7.
[3] *Pur JS*, sākhī 52, pp. 104–5.
[5] *AG*, p. 147. See *B40*, f. 122a.

[2] *AG*, p. 360. See *B40*, f. 91a–b.
[4] *AG*, pp. 938–46. See *B40(Eng)*, p. 139n.
[6] *AG*, p. 237.
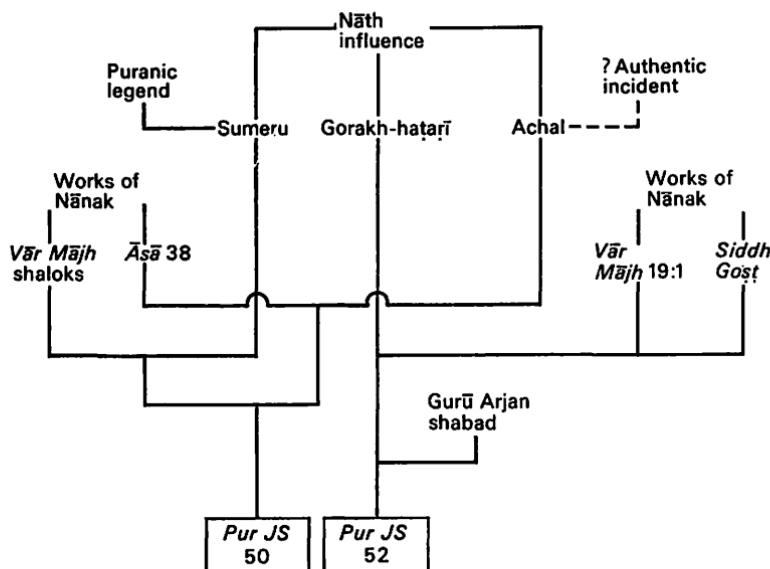
Figure 10

This *Purātan* pattern may be represented as in figure 10. The pattern, though more complex than that of the *Bālā* version, is still relatively simple. Another stage in the growing complexity results from an analysis of the material which, in various stages of growth, is found in Bhāī Gurdās's *Vār* 1, the *Ādi Sākhīs*, the *B40 Janam-sākhī*, and the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*. This complexity does not derive from their several treatments of a single Sumeru tradition,[1] but rather from their versions of a single Achal tradition.[2]

Only two points relating to the former will be noted here. The first is the inclusion in the Sumeru discourse of the shabad *Āsā* 38.[3] This is the shabad which the *Purātan* tradition sets within its Achal discourse. The imagery of the hymn points unmistakably to a Nāth audience and with equal clarity suggests a liquor-drinking context. This leaves only the question of location for the compiler to decide. The *Purātan* tradition chooses Achal and the *Ādi Sākhīs/B40/Miharbān* tradition selects Mount Sumeru.

The second point to be noted is that the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* appends to its version of the Sumeru discourse an account, both brief and vague, of a visit to Gorakh-haṭaṛī.[4] This *Miharbān* anecdote bears no

[1] *BG* I:28–31. *AS*, pp. 36–42. *B40*, ff. 86a–93a. *Mih JS* I.384–416.
[2] *BG* I:39–44. *AS*, pp. 73–6. *B40*, ff. 117a–122b. *Mih JS* II.70–137.
[3] *AS*, pp. 40–1. *B40*, ff. 91a–b. *Mih JS* I.407–9.
[4] *Mih JS* I.416–19. *GNSR*, p. 60
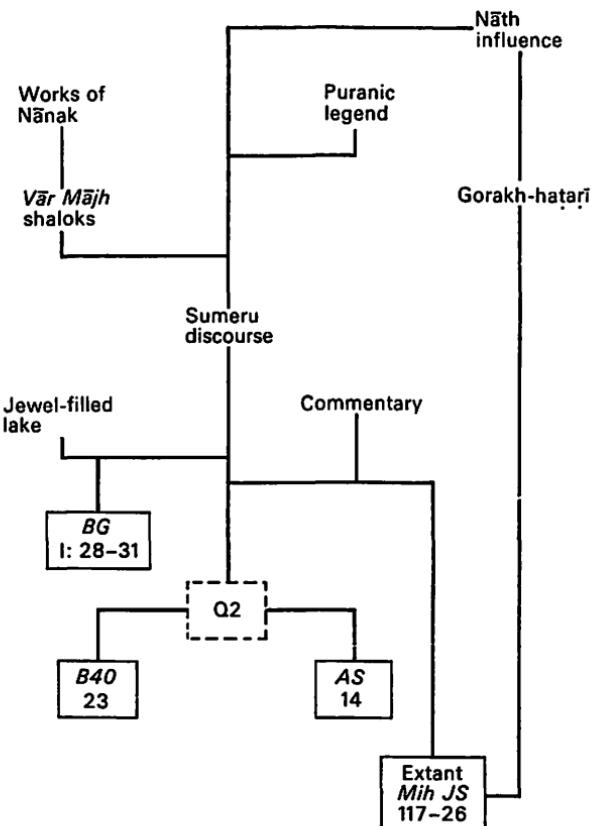
Figure 11

evident relationship to the Gorakh-haṭaṛī discourse of the *Purātan* tradition. It records a conversation with 'the yogīs' gurū' and incorporates an apocryphal shalok together with the shabad *Gauṛī* 15.[1]

The Sumeru discourse pattern which emerges from a comparison of these four versions is shown in figure 11. Once again the *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs* compilers have the *Q2* manuscript as a common source.

This is still a relatively simple pattern and one which stands in marked contrast to the four corresponding versions of the Achal sākhī. The Achal sākhī as it appears in the *B40 Janam-sākhī* may be summarized as follows. Bābā Nānak proceeds to Achal on the occasion of the annual Śivrātri fair, taking with him his trusted disciple Lahaṇā (Gurū Aṅgad). There he observes pious folk performing various devout ceremonies. Meanwhile the sly 'Siddhs' (i.e. Nāth yogīs), evidently annoyed by the

[1] *AG*, pp. 155-6. The shabad clearly assumes a Nāth audience.

manner in which the people have ignored them, have hidden a brass pot (*loṭā*) belonging to these pious folk. Bābā Nānak confounds them by ordering Lahaṇā to reveal the place where the *loṭā* was concealed.

A debate then takes place between Bābā Nānak and a yogī named Bhagarnāth (or Bhāgarnāth). The discourse turns on a recitation of Gurū Nānak's *Sūhī* 1,[1] and an exegesis of a portion of this shabad is given. Bhagarnāth refuses to accept defeat, and declaring Nānak to be 'a worthless Bedī' he summons the eighty-four Siddh Masters, the nine Nāths, and sundry other figures of Puranic legend. The Siddhs (Bhāgarnāth and his fellow yogīs) begin by performing a series of miracles, including the magical propulsion of a wall and flight on a deerskin. In response Bābā Nānak challenges them to a game of hide-and-seek. The Siddhs hide first and are easily found by Nānak. Bābā Nānak then 'merges in the four elements' (i.e. becomes invisible) and the Siddhs, when they are finally compelled to acknowledge their inability to locate him, make their submission. As soon as they admit defeat Bābā Nānak reappears and utters *Vār Mājh*, shalok 1 of stanza 19. When the humbled Siddhs ask him to instruct them in true yoga Bābā Nānak replies with a recitation of the *Siddh Goṣṭ*. He then returns home triumphant.

This version should be compared with the briefer version recorded by Bhāi Gurdās, the closely corresponding *Ādi Sākhīs* text, and the much longer *Miharbān* account. All four clearly represent versions of the same tradition. Bhāi Gurdās omits several of the details (for example, the presence of Lahaṇā) and quotes no shabads, but it should not thereby be assumed that his version was appreciably earlier than that of the source used by the *B40* compiler. The differences can obviously be traced to the constraints imposed by Bhāi Gurdās's poetic medium, for it is clear that he was working from a source which includes both the shabad *Sūhī* 1 and the *Vār Mājh* shalok. He has merely converted both into his own briefer words. Moreover, although he omits some *B40* details he adds others. The Siddhs perform a much more impressive display of magic in Bhāi Gurdās's account.[2]

The *Ādi Sākhīs* version differs only slightly from *B40*. It omits the hide-and-seek story, and adds some extra exegesis which the *B40* sākhī lacks. The two are plainly from the same common *Q2* source and it appears that the *Q2* manuscript contained neither the hide-and-seek story nor the extra exegetical material. This is certainly a safe conclusion in the case of the former. The additional anecdote disturbs the unity of the story concerning the encounter with the Siddhs and can only be explained as an interpolation. The *B40* compiler presumably derived it from current oral tradition.

The extra exegesis included in the *Ādi Sākhīs* version raises issues which are a little more complex.[3] Although the absence of the extra material from the *B40* version seems to indicate another instance of inter-

---

[1] *AG*, p. 728.   [2] For an English translation see *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 40–3.
[3] The additional material consists of the exegetical passage which follows the fourth stanza of *Sūhī* 1, *AS*, p. 75.

polation it can hardly have been a simple addition of the kind made by the *B40* compiler when he introduced the hide-and-seek episode. This conclusion follows from a more extended comparison of the two versions. The *B40* text also includes two exegetical passages in precisely the same style as the additional *Ādi Sākhīs* material[1] and there appears to be little doubt that these *B40* passages (which the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler uses in only a slightly different form) must have derived from the same source as the extra *Ādi Sākhīs* exegesis. The difference is merely one of quantity. The *B40* compiler has taken only a small amount from this supplementary source, whereas the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler has incorporated rather more in his version of the discourse.[2]

It is clear that in both instances the exegetical material represents an interpolation within an earlier narrative tradition concerning the Achal discourse. Moreover, there can be no doubt concerning the source of the interpolation. The style is unmistakably that of the *Miharbān* tradition. A comparison with the extant *Miharbān* version confirms this and also indicates that the actual source must have been an earlier recension of this tradition.

This much is clear. The issue which remains obscure concerns the precise manner in which the *Miharbān* borrowings entered the two janam-sākhīs. Behind the *Ādi Sākhīs* and the *B40 Janam-sākhī* there lies the common *Q2* source for the Achal narrative. Did *Q2* include the *Miharbān* borrowing? If so did it include only the portion which appears in the *B40* text, or did it also incorporate the extra material recorded in the *Ādi Sākhīs*? If this manuscript did not include the *Miharbān* borowing, from where did the *Ādi Sākhīs* and *B40* compilers obtain it? Did they have access to another common manuscript (a *Miharbān* manuscript)? If so, does it mean that the *Ādi Sākhīs* and the *B40 Janam-sākhī* originated within the same geographical area? This is but the beginning of a series of related questions arising from this situation. There is, however, little value to be derived from posing them, for the available texts do not provide the means of reaching answers. We can merely affirm that the two janam-sākhīs incorporate borrowings of differing length, derived from an early recension of the *Miharbān* tradition and introduced into an even earlier Achal narrative.

The extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhi* carries the process of expansion much further. This it achieves partly by expanding the narrative element, partly by quoting the *Siddh Goṣṭ* in full, partly by introducing extra quotations from the works of Nānak, and above all by adding substantial quantities of exegesis in the characteristic *Miharbān* style. This, when compared with the *Ādi Sākhīs* and *B40* analogues, demonstrates the relative lateness of the extant *Miharbān* text. Although the origins of the *Miharbān* tradition may date from the early or mid-seventeenth century, the *Miharbān*

---

[1] Exegesis of the second and third stanzas of *Sūhī* 1. *B40*, ff. 118b–119a, 119b–120a.

[2] The *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler is rather more consistent, recording each stanza in turn with its appropriate exegesis attached. The *B40* compiler first records the second stanza with its exegesis and then the entire shabad followed by the exegesis of stanza 3 only.

Janam-sākhī as we know it today is obviously a product of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

The evolved discourse may be represented in tabular form as follows:

Śivrātri fair at Achal	*BG*	*AS*	*B40*	*Mih JS*
Achal identified with Baṭālā site	*BG*			
Aṅgad as companion		*AS*	*B40*	*Mih JS*
The hidden *loṭā*	*BG*	*AS*	*B40*	*Mih JS*
Discourse with Bhagarnāth based on *Sūhī* 1	*BG*	*AS*	*B40*	*Mih JS*
Exegesis of stanza 1				*Mih JS*
Exegesis of stanza 2		*AS*	*B40*	*Mih JS*
Exegesis of stanza 3		*AS*	*B40*	*Mih JS*
Exegesis of stanza 4		*AS*		*Mih JS*
Contest of magical powers	*BG*	*AS*	*B40*	*Mih JS*
Hide-and-seek test			*B40*	
Recitation of *Sūhī* 6				*Mih JS*
Exegesis				*Mih JS*
Recitation of *Surplus Shaloks* 12–13				*Mih JS*
Exegesis				*Mih JS*
Recitation of *Vār Mājh* 19:1	*BG*	*AS*	*B40*	*Mih JS*
Exegesis				*Mih JS*
Recitation of the *Siddh Goṣṭ*				
Statement only	*BG*	*AS*	*B40*	
Recitation in full				*Mih JS*
Exegesis				*Mih JS*
Recitation of *Japjī* concluding stanzas				*Mih JS*
Exegesis				*Mih JS*

This evolved pattern combines three basic components and an extensive supplement. The basic components can be identified as three separate stories. One of these is a simple narrative anecdote. The remaining two are narrative discourses which derive from a blending of popular attitudes towards Nāth yogīs with evocative references in the works of Nānak.

The first identifiable component is the story of the hidden *loṭā*. It was presumably to this anecdote that the Achal location and Śivrātri occasion were first attached, and it is possible that an actual visit to the Nāth centre near Baṭālā may underlie it.

The second component is the discourse with Bhagarnāth (or Bhāgar-nāth, or Bhaṅgarnāth) which has been developed out of Gurū Nānak's shabad *Sūhī* 1. In this instance the shabad is primary, and the Nāth references incidental. The brief narrative relates exclusively to the content of the shabad and although Bhāī Gurdās does not actually quote the shabad it is clear that he was working from a version which already incorporated it.

In the third story the Nānak composition is again primary but the Nāth reference is much more prominent. The nucleus of the discourse is provided by the shalok from *Vār Mājh* in which Gurū Nānak emphatically spurns the power to work wonders or the capacity to endure rigorous

asceticism. The message which Nānak seeks to communicate through the shalok concerns the grace of God, and magical powers are mentioned merely in order to dismiss them as irrelevant. It was, however, the reference to magical and ascetic powers which attracted his later audience. The reference at once suggested the powers popularly attributed to Nāth yogīs and so the discourse began to evolve. The process ended with an anecdote which relates a contest of magical powers. These are demonstrated only by the Nāths, for Nānak's shalok provides a sufficient answer to their antics. For at least one disciple, however, this was unsatisfactory. If Nānak was greater than the Nāths, then plainly he could beat them at their own game. A story concerning Nānak's power to render himself invisible was developed and this erratic feature enters the *B40* version as the hide-and-seek test.

Before this *B40* interpolation had been introduced (and probably at the time when the discourse first evolved) another supplementary feature had been added. It was inevitable that Nānak's *Rāmkalī* composition entitled *Siddh Goṣṭ* should find its way into a janam-sākhī anecdote, and the 'Contest of Magical Powers' sākhī was chosen as an appropriate point to introduce it. At first it is merely mentioned. Later (in the *Miharbān* version) it is quoted in full.

This third discourse, 'The Contest of Magical Powers', is the anecdote which the *Purātan* tradition places in a Gorakh-haṭaṛī setting. In its *Purātan* context it remains an individual sākhī. In the *Bhāī Gurdās/Ādi Sākhīs/B40/Miharbān* tradition, however, it becomes a part of a composite Achal sākhī.[1]

The major supplement which is later added to this composite sākhī is the exegetical material introduced by the *Miharbān* compilers. Given the specific interests and purposes of the *Miharbān* compilers and redactors this was an inevitable development. In the late recension represented by the extant *Miharbān* manuscripts this feature has attained considerable dimensions and now provides a much greater proportion of the discourse's material than the three original anecdotes. The process of expansion has been achieved in this later recension not only by adding exegetical passages to *Sūhī* 1 and *Vār Mājh* 19:1, but also by quoting the *Siddh Goṣṭ* in full and by introducing additional extracts from the works of Nānak.[2] To these extra quotations exegesis had to be added, and the end product is a discourse of considerable length.

This proliferation of material must have been a continuing process within the *Miharbān* tradition, a process which eventually issued during the early nineteenth century in the extant *Miharbān* text. It was obviously an earlier and briefer recension which provided the exegetical interpolations appearing in the *Ādi Sākhīs* and *B40* accounts. These interpolations

---

[1] The introductory portion of the *B40* Ṭillā sākhī also relates a contest of miraculous powers with a Nāth yogī. *B40*, f. 182a. This is a much later tradition which may perhaps derive in part from the earlier tradition.

[2] The shabad *Sūhī* 6 (*AG*, pp. 729–30) has obviously been added because its key word, *bhāṇḍā* (pot, vessel), is also a key word of *Sūhī* 1 and of the discourse built around it. *Mih JS* 11.70–4.

? Authentic incident

Nāth influence

Works of Nānak

Sūhī 1   Vār Mājh 19:1   Siddh Goṣṭ

Achal

Śivarātri fair: the hidden loṭā

Discourse with Bhagarnāth

Contest of magical powers

Composite Achal Discourse

Pur JS 52

Commentary

BG I: 39–44

Miharbān tradition

Sūhī 1 exegesis

Hide-and-seek test

Q2

Sūhī 1 exegesis

Extra quotations and commentary

B40 29

AS 23

Extant Mih JS 173
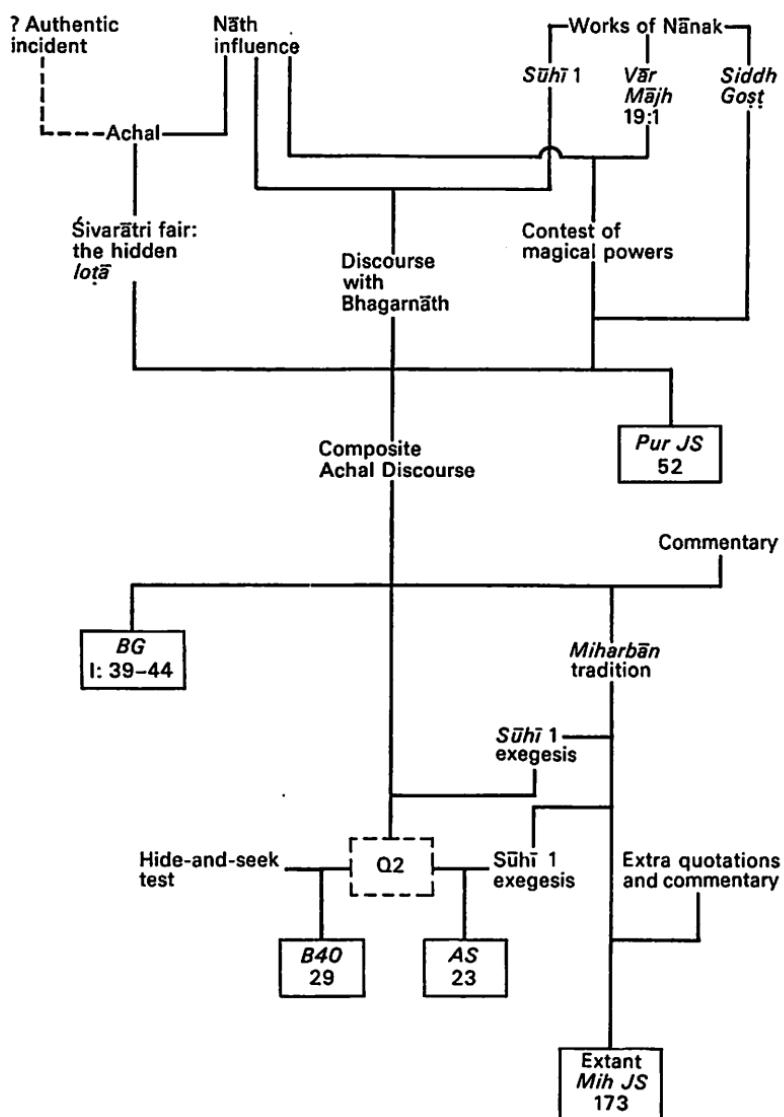
Figure 12

were introduced into the second of the three original components (the discourse based on *Sūhī* 1).

The result of this process of blending and expansion is a single sākhī illustrating an unusual variety of janam-sākhī features. The pattern which accounts for its growth is illustrated in figure 12. A simplified version of this diagram and of the Sumeru diagram for the same group of janam-sākhīs can be compared with the corresponding discourses of the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs. This produces an interesting web of connecting strands, illustrated in figure 13.

This, it must be stressed, is a simplified pattern. Some of the minor strands have been omitted, the *Bālā* development is completely un-represented, and the janam-sākhīs included in the diagram offer other instances of Nāth influence operating upon the janam-sākhī evolutionary processes. The diagram will, however, serve to illustrate a measure of that influence. At the same time it should provide a glimpse of the complex mechanics of sākhī and janam-sākhī development.

Example 9: Rājā Śivanābh

Narrative discourse with narrative anecdotes added: complex composite sākhī

The story of Bābā Nānak's meeting with Rājā Śivanābh consists, in its evolved form, of three distinct episodes. The first relates the story of how a merchant of Lahore visited Kartārpur and was there converted by Bābā Nānak. This is followed by the merchant's visit to the domain of Rājā Śivanābh and the conversion of the latter. Finally Bābā Nānak himself visits Śivanābh.[1] The *Purātan* janam-sākhīs add that the rājā's domain was in Siṅghalādīp (Sri Lanka).[2]

Although the reference to Sri Lanka must be dismissed as a later interpolation[3] it is possible that a Rājā Śivanābh did in fact exist and that Gurū Nānak actually met him. This possibility arises from the universal agreement amongst the janam-sākhī narrators concerning his existence and the apparent absence in pre-Sikh tradition of any figure to whom the janam-sākhī Śivanābh might be traced. It is, however, no more than a possibility. The well-known anecdote which the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs set in Siṅghalādīp is the product of a single tradition, not of all the janam-sākhīs. In the *Miharbān* tradition there appears an entirely different encounter with Śivanābh.[4] The area of agreement is thus confined to his mere existence and if in fact an authentic encounter did take place its details have been buried beyond recall.

The origin of the Śivanābh portion of the composite sākhī (the third of the three episodes noted above) lies not in any such encounter, real or imagined, but in Gurū Nānak's shabad *Mārū* 11.[5] The discourse which has been built around this composition follows the standard pattern of

[1] *B40*, ff. 138b–140b, 140b–144b, 144b–154a.　　[2] *Pur JS*, p. 86. *GNSR*, p. 48.
[3] *GNSR*, pp. 114–17.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[4] *Mih JS* II.1–35, 65–6.
[5] *AG*, p. 992. *B40*, ff. 150b–151b.
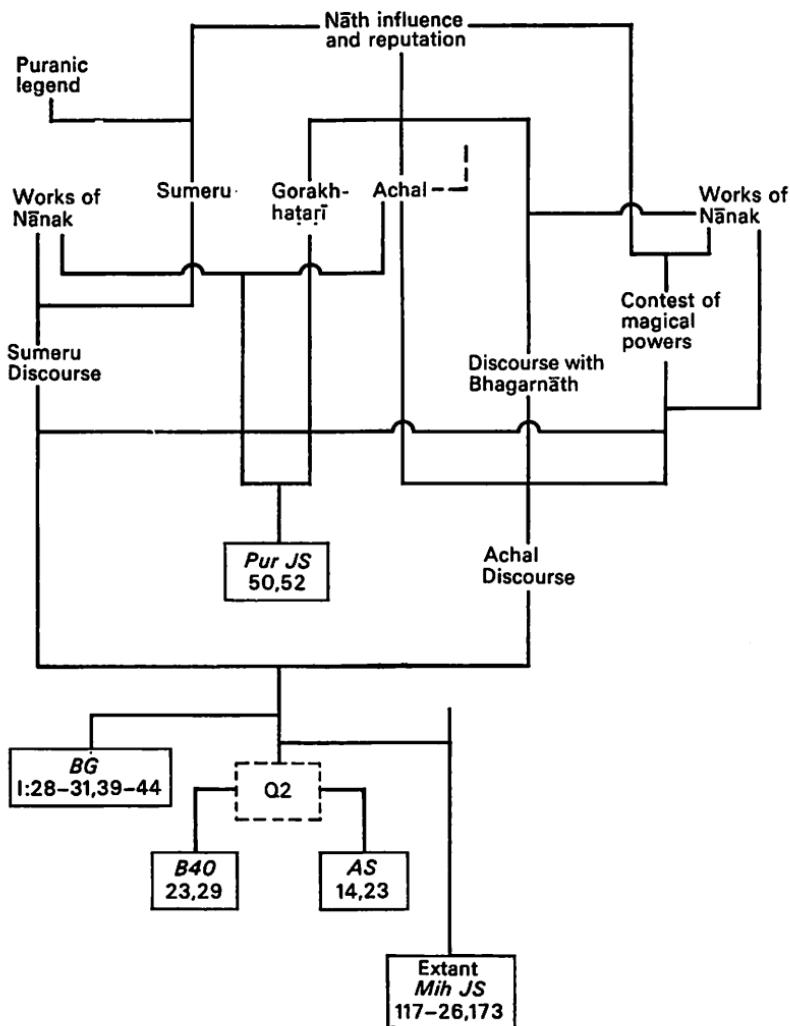
Figure 13

episodes developed out of works by Gurū Nānak. Each stanza serves as
Bābā Nānak's reply, and Śivanābh's questions are framed in accordance
with the given answers. Because of the manner in which it has been
contrived the resultant discourse provides an unusually clear example of
the standard pattern. Although the key words in Śivanābh's questions have
obviously been taken from the stanzas which provide the replies the

questions do not really correspond to the replies. This element of discord derives not from ineptness, but rather from the anecdotal concern of the narrator who first framed the questions. Whereas a close correspondence would not have produced a coherent discourse, a measure of freedom enables him to construct a neat little tale of how persistent cross-questioning finally enabled the rājā to identity his mysterious visitor.

The misinterpretations which are needed in order to make the shabad fit the narrative intention occur in a series corresponding to the stanzas of the shabad. The first quotation is the refrain, in which Gurū Nānak apostrophizes God in the following terms:

gusāī terā kahā nāmu kaise jāti
jā kau bhitari mahali bulāvahu pūchhau bāti niranti[1]

Master, where is Thy Name [to be discerned]? How art Thou to be known?
When Thou dost summon me within Thy palace let me inquire [of Thee the way of mystical] union.

The janam-sākhī narrator misconstrues this in three respects. First, he overlooks the word *kahā(n)*, 'where', which indicates that the question relates to locality; secondly, he takes *jāti*, 'known', to be *jāti*, 'caste'; and thirdly, he understands *mahal* to refer to an earthly palace. Were these three assumptions to be accepted a translation of the following kind would be required:

Master, what is your name and what your caste?
Let me invite you within [my] palace that I may inquire [of you the way of mystical] union [with God].

This is patently a mistranslation, but if the couplet is construed in this sense it can provide a narrator with a suitable query to put into his inter-locutor's mouth. This initial query serves to introduce the discourse, and the actual stanzas can then be utilized as a series of responses by Bābā Nānak to a series of appropriate questions posed by the chosen inter-locutor.

The same variety of misconstruction persists throughout the remainder of the discourse. The first stanza offers a brief description of the 'true yogī', a variety of reinterpretation which occurs commonly in the works of Gurū Nānak. It does indeed include the word *jogī*, but it does not (if properly construed) read like an answer to the interlocutor's question, 'Master, are you a yogī?' In all five instances the quotations from Gurū Nānak's shabad have been pressed into a use which they cannot really serve.

At two points the interpolations imposed by different narrators diverge. Stanza 4 begins with the words *dovai sire*, which may be variously translated as 'in both respects', 'both kinds', 'in both directions', etc. The *B40* narrator (or his source) evidently recognized the ambiguity, for in framing his introductory question he merely says, 'Master, tell me about

_____
[1] *B40*, f. 150b. The Ādi Granth version corresponds almost exactly.

one *sirā* that I may understand',[1] thereby avoiding the awkward necessity of indicating what *sirā* means. The *Colebrooke* narrator evidently perceived the same difficulty and solved it by bracketing stanzas 3 and 4, without inserting a question to introduce stanza 4.[2] The *Hāfizābād* narrator is, however, prepared to offer an interpretation. The word *sirā*, he believes, must refer to the two dominant religious communities, and in accordance with this assumption he interposes the question: 'Are you a Hindu or a Muslim?'[3]

The second variant distinguishing the *B40* and *Purātan* discourses occurs in their treatment of the fifth stanza. For the *B40* narrator the suggestive word is *vāsī*, 'dweller' or 'resident', which occurs at the end of the first line. From this he has devised the question: 'Master, in what place is your home?'[4] The *Colebrooke* narrator (followed by *Hāfizābād*) has taken the key word to be *gorakh*, with the result that in the *Purātan* version we find the question: 'Are you Gorakhnāth?'[5]

The discourse which, in its variant versions, has been constructed in this manner constitutes the nucleus of the complete anecdote. Next an appropriate interlocutor and setting were required. The former had of necessity to be someone possessing a palace and for this role a rājā named Śivanābh was well fitted. A suitable setting is provided by the age-old story of the holy man tempted by women. Śivanābh, having previously determined to find a perfected sādhū, enlists a cadre of alluring damsels and charges them with the responsibility of tempting all visiting faqīrs. Only the most sublime will be able to resist their proffered charms and the rājā will in this manner find the teacher whom he seeks. This portion of the Śivanābh story bears a marked resemblance to the legend of Rṣya Śṛṅga, a resemblance which was noted by the *B40* compiler.[6] The theme is one which recurs in the Epic literature and there can be no doubt that the janam-sākhī tradition must derive either from one particular legend or from the cumulative effect of their recurrence in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[7]

A second introductory element is the brief episode which relates how Bābā Nānak's arrival caused a withered garden to blossom. The withered garden episode opens the narrative. Next comes the dispatch of the temptresses to test the mysterious wonder-working faqīr, followed by their failure and submission. The stage is then set and the discourse based on *Mārū* 11 duly follows.

---

[1] *B40*, f. 151a. In the English translation of the *B40* text this has been rendered: 'Master, tell me about one world . . .' See *B40(Eng)*, p. 169. This follows the interpretation of Teja Singh in *Sabadārath*, p. 992, n. 28. Teja Singh construes *dovai sirai* as a reference to this world and the next, to the present life and the hereafter. For yet another interpretation see Sāhib Singh, *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib Darapaṇ*, where the term is understood to be a reference to *janam maran* (birth and death, the round of transmigration). Loc. cit., vol. vii, pp. 376, 377.

[2] *Pur JS*, p. 87.   [3] *Pur JS*, p. 87, n. *.   [4] *B40*, f. 151b.   [5] *Pur JS*, p. 87

[6] *B40*, ff. 146b–147a. See above, p. 65. The legend of Rṣya Śṛṅga, the one-horned ascetic, is a much-travelled tale. See 'The youth who had never seen a woman' in Joseph Jacobs, *Barlaam and Josaphat* (London, 1896), pp. cxxx–cxxxi.

[7] Cf. *Mah.* I.71–2; III.110–13; V.9. Also *Rām.* I.9–11; III.11.

In its later recensions the narrative followed two different lines of development. One of these eventually produced the composite sākhī with its three distinct episodes, whereas the other presented the Śivanābh discourse as an isolated anecdote, considerably expanded but still separate. The first line leads to a common source utilized by both the *Ādi Sākhīs* and the *B40* compilers; and the second to the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* of the *Purātan* tradition. Both lines are eventually drawn together by the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*.

The composite sākhī was formed by combining the Śivanābh discourse with the anecdote concerning the Lahore merchant. The simple tale of the merchant who was converted during a visit to Kartārpur is, in style and substance, completely independent of the Śivanābh discourse and presumably developed in isolation from it. The two anecdotes were subsequently linked by a third. The merchant, following his conversion, sails away to Śivanābh's domain, and having enrolled the rājā as a believer assures him that he will one day meet the Gurū himself. But, he adds, the Gurū may come in disguise. The rājā must watch alertly for his coming. This provides the link connecting the two sākhīs although it is unlikely that it was originally developed with this conscious intention. Had that been the case the beliefs and ceremonies attributed to Śivanābh and his subjects would probably have been Śaivite.[1] The distinctively Vaiṣṇava character of the accusations brought against the merchant by Śivanābh's outraged subjects suggests that an anecdote developed in association with a different person has been appropriated to provide the needed link.

The composite sākhī is now substantially complete and subsequent additions do not affect its structure. Of the later supplements the most obvious are two shabads which appear in the *B40* version of the tempting of the Gurū episode. Both illustrate the common practice of inserting quotations from the works of Nānak because their themes and terminology appear to accord well with the subjects of particular anecdotes. A simile commonly used by Gurū Nānak and his Sant predecessors is that of a woman representing the devotee. The imagery is often mildly erotic, the intention being to express in terms comprehensible to human understanding the nature of the devotee's mystical union with God. In several instances it is the faithless devotee who is portrayed, and in such cases the woman appears as one given to fleeting worldly pleasures.

A woman desires elegance and carnal delights,
Betel-leaf, flowers, the transient sweetness which turns to anguish.
She revels and makes merry, but all must turn to lamentation.
Let her cast herself upon the Lord's mercy and all her deeds will find fulfilment.[2]

Once again Gurū Nānak's meaning has been misunderstood by a janam-sākhī narrator. A real woman has been envisaged and the Śivanābh introduction has provided a convenient place to introduce Nānak's *Basant Aṣṭapadī* 1. This particular shabad was included in the version used

[1] *B40*, ff. 141b–142a.   [2] *Basant aṭ* 1, *AG*, p. 1187. *B40*, f. 147b.

by the *Ādi Sākhīs* and *B40* compilers.[1] The second shabad (Gurū Nānak's *Āsā* 35) has been interpolated by the *B40* compiler for the same reason as the *Basant* shabad and on the basis of the same misunderstanding.[2]

Meanwhile the original Śivanābh discourse had been receiving different treatment within the tradition which eventually issued in the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*.[3] This version lacks the two anecdotes concerning the Lahore merchant. It also relates the story of the temptresses in the briefest of terms and omits the extra shabads noted above. Instead two other episodes are introduced, both of them derived from pre-Sikh tradition. The first relates how Bābā Nānak insisted upon entering Śivanābh's city mounted on the rājā's back.[4] The second is a grotesque tale of how Bābā Nānak commanded Śivanābh to cut his son's throat and then eat the boy's flesh.[5] It is within this tradition that the reference to Siṅghalādīp appears. Other earlier versions lack it, indicating instead that the abode of Rājā Śivanābh was believed to be somewhere in North India and probably within the Pañjāb itself. A reference to Gorakh-haṭaṛī (Gor-khatrī) which has survived in the *Colebrooke* text suggests an original location within or near the Pañjāb.[6]

Pre-Sikh tradition has provided the extra *Colebrooke* material, and the manner in which it came to be added to the Śivanābh story is at once evident. In the *Mārkandeya-samāsyā parva* of the *Mahābhārata* there is to be found the tale of how a Brāhmaṇ once visited King Śivi, son of Uśīnara. He requested food and when Śivi asked him to be more specific he commanded that the king's son should be killed and cooked. In obedience to this command King Śivi duly slaughtered his son and took the cooked flesh to the visitor. The Brāhmaṇ then ordered the king to eat the flesh himself and only when Śivi began to do so did he stop him. King Śivi had passed the test. The Brāhmaṇ, who revealed himself to be Vidhātri (Viśvakarman) in disguise, commended the king's virtue, restored his son, and proceeded on his way.[7] The name Śivi was evidently confused by the *Colebrooke* narrator with Śivanābh and in this manner the *Mahābhārata* tradition came to be grafted on to the janam-sākhī anecdote.

One further stage in the evolution of the Śivanābh story is marked by the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*. The person responsible for the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī* had access to a manuscript followed by the *B40* compiler (the hypothetical manuscript designated *Q1*) and also to either the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* or another manuscript very close to it. This meant that he was in a position to use either or both traditions. The rule invariably

---

[1] For the *Ādi Sākhīs* version see *AS*, pp. 60–9. [2] *B40*, f. 148a–b.

[3] IOL MS Panj. B6, ff. 162a–176b. Photozincograph Facsimile, pp. 322–51.

[4] *Pur JS*, p. 87.   [5] *Pur JS*, pp. 88–9. *GNSR*, p. 48.

[6] In 1969 it was claimed that the authenticity of the Sri Lanka visit had been established by a newly discovered interlinear inscription incised on a slab now located in the Anurādhapura Museum. This claim must be rejected. For a discussion of the alleged inscription see W. H. McLeod, 'Inter-linear inscriptions in Sri Lanka', *South Asia*, 3 (August 1973), pp. 105–6.

[7] *Mah.* III.197. In the Buddhist version of this legend (the Śivi-jātaka) the Brāhmaṇ demands the king's eyes. E. B. Cowell (ed.), *The Jataka, or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, vol. iv (Cambridge, 1901), pp. 250–6.

observed by the *Hāfizābād* copyist was to use his *Colebrooke* manuscript as his principal source and to resort to the *QI* source only where it contained important material which *Colebrooke* lacked.[1] Both manuscripts included versions of the Śivanābh discourse, and so the *Hāfizābād* copyist followed the *Colebrooke* alternative, in sequence as well as in its actual text. The *Colebrooke* manuscript did not, however, include the merchant anecdotes. For these the *Hāfizābād* compiler turned to his second manuscript, once again following its sequence as well as its text. The result is that the two portions of the composite sākhī have been separated in the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*. The merchant anecdotes are recorded at the conclusion of Bābā Nānak's first journey, and the Śivanābh discourse towards the end of his second journey.[2]

The pattern which emerges from this analysis may be diagrammatically represented as in figure 14. This diagram illustrates only the basic structure of the composite sākhī. Within the sākhī a number of supplementary elements have been accommodated, most of them relatively late and all of them interesting. First, there is clear evidence of a distinctive Nānak theology. This is expressed in the doctrine, communicated by the merchant to Rājā Śivanābh, that Bābā Nānak is present wherever he is worshipped.[3] Secondly, the sākhī incorporates some apologetic passages, notably a clear definition of the nature of salvation.[4] These passages also include a polemic directed against Vaiṣṇava ceremonies and, in approving contrast, a description of the Nānak-panthī pattern of worship.[5] Thirdly, there is an interpolation which goes to unusual lengths in stressing the importance of ritual bathing.[6] This evidently reflects a controversy which must have troubled the Sikh community for many years. Other indications of the same controversy appear elsewhere in the janam-sākhīs.[7]

A final complication which deserves to be noted appears in the late *Purātan* manuscript owned by Sevā Singh Sevak of Tarn Tāran.[8] This manuscript, although clearly within the *Purātan* tradition, follows the *QI* version in its entirety.[9] To this *QI* version it adds two brief extracts drawn from the *Colebrooke* lineage. The first is the introduction appended to Bābā Nānak's discourse with Śivanābh, in which Nānak's crossing to Śivanābh's domain is incoherently described.[10] This sets the discourse explicitly in Siṅghalādīp. The second extract comprises the introductory portion of the anecdote in which Śivanābh is commanded to kill and consume his son.[11] Obviously the unknown copyist of this manuscript had access to a relatively late recension of the *QI* version. Unlike his *Hāfizābād*

[1] See below, pp. 188–91.
[2] M. A. Macauliffe (ed.), *Janam Sākhī Bābe Nānak Jī kī* (Rāwalpiṇḍī, 1885), pp. 187–97, 216–25. In Vīr Singh's *Purātan Janam-sākhī* these appear as sakhis 41 and 47 respectively. *Pur JS*, pp. 74–8, 86–9.
[3] *B40*, f. 144a. *Pur JS*, p. 77. *AS*, p. 63.
[4] *B40*, f. 142b. *Pur JS*, p. 76. *AS*, p. 63.
[5] *B40*, ff. 140b–143b *passim*. *Pur JS*, pp. 76–8. *AS*, pp. 61–4.
[6] *B40*, f. 141a–b. *Pur JS*, p. 76. *AS*, pp. 61–2.   [7] See below, pp. 227–8.
[8] Sevā Singh Sevak, *Prāchīn Janam Sākhī* (Jalandhar, 1969). See above, pp. 26–7.
[9] In common with the *B40* text it adds the shabad *Āsā* 35.
[10] Sevā Singh Sevak, op. cit., p. 89.   [11] Ibid., p. 94.
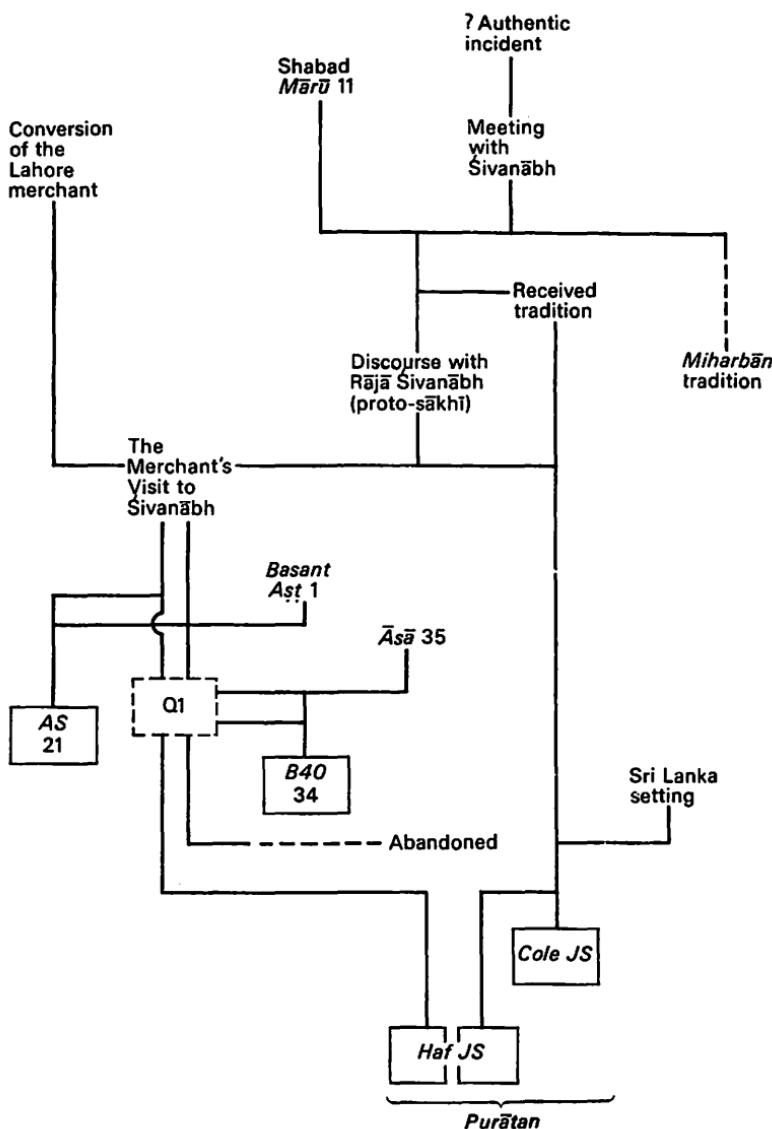
Figure 14

predecessor he preferred to follow the more consistent and attractive *Q1* narrative throughout the entire sākhī, adding to it only the *Purātan* location and the inconsequential introduction to one of the *Purātan* anecdotes.

Example 10: Gurū Aṅgad
Narrative anecdotes: clusters

The ultimate origin of the Gurū Aṅgad cluster of anecdotes is to be found in a demonstrably authentic fact. Bhāī Gurdās briefly states it in the following words:

> He shattered the old traditions and [before his death] appointed Aṅgad as Gurū, For his sons did not obey him, becoming instead perfidious rebels and deserters.[1]

> Before he died he installed Lahaṇā as his successor, setting the Gurū's canopy over his head.
> Merging his light in [Aṅgad's] light the Satgurū changed his form.
> None could comprehend this mystery; a wonder of wonders he revealed!
> Changing his body he made Aṅgad's body his own![2]

There can be no doubt whatsoever that Aṅgad was the disciple chosen to succeed Nānak as Gurū. This is the starting-point and from this origin it is possible to trace an evolving pattern of supplementary anecdotes. These do not form a single cluster but rather three major clusters, each with its own distinctive sequence and selection of material. The analysis which follows will trace two of these three clusters. One emerges in the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs.[3] The other appears in both the *Ādi Sākhīs* and *B40 Janam-sākhī*,[4] and from the former descends to the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*.[5] These two clusters were evidently the first to evolve, although some of their supplementary components are subsequent additions. The third cluster is a later development which came to be attached to the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs.

The pattern of development for both of the earlier clusters begins with the authentic tradition concerning Nānak's choice of Aṅgad as his successor. To this a second authentic element can be added, namely the fact that at least during his later life Gurū Aṅgad must have lived in the village of Khaḍūr.[6] The tradition now divides, one line of descent leading to the *Purātan* cluster and the other through the hypothetical *Q2* source to an *Ādi Sākhis/B40* cluster.

According to the *Purātan* version Aṅgad resided in Khaḍūr prior to his first meeting with Nānak. There he served as the priest (*pujārī*) of the Trehaṇ Khatrīs who were worshippers of Durgā, and his conversion took place when he happened to overhear Khaḍūr's solitary Sikh singing the hymns of Bābā Nānak. His name during this pre-conversion period is said to have been Lahaṇā.[7]

[1] *BG* 1:38. *SLTGN(Eng)*, p. 40.
[2] *BG* 1:45. *SLTGN(Eng)*, p. 43.
[3] *Pur JS*, pp. 106–8, 110–11.
[4] *AS*, pp. 69–98. *B40*, ff. 94b–110a.
[5] *Mih JS* 11.66–156.
[6] Amritsar District.
[7] *Pur JS*, p. 106.

The other cluster agrees that Aṅgad was a Trehan Khatrī named Lahaṇā who formerly worshipped Durgā, but in other respects it diverges markedly from the *Purātan* tradition. It relates that Lahaṇā dwelt in the village of Harike, near Matte dī Sarāi, and that he first heard of Bābā Nānak while passing by Kartārpur during an annual pilgrimage to a temple of Durgā. Only after his conversion and a period of three years spent in Kartārpur did he move from Harike to Khaḍūr in response to a command from his new Master.[1]

Two supplementary features are added to both of the evolving traditions before they finally diverge and go their separate ways. The first is the explanation which is given to account for the change of name from Lahaṇā to Aṅgad. The latter name was chosen because Lahaṇā was to be a replica of his Master. He was to be a 'limb' (*aṅg*) from Nānak's own body.[2] The other anecdote common to both clusters is the story of how Aṅgad ruined a new suit of clothes rather than disobey a command given by his Master. Nānak had instructed him to carry home a bundle of dripping grass (*Purātan*) or paddy (*Ādi Sākhīs/B40*). When Nānak's wife observed how the slime had ruined Aṅgad's clothes she rebuked her husband. In reply Nānak assured her that it was really an 'affusion of saffron', not a 'sprinkling of mud'. In other words, it was the seal of succession which she was observing.[3]

The two traditions now diverge completely, and it is only in a second recension of the *Ādi Sākhīs* that they come together again. To the common material the *Purātan* tradition adds the following supplementary anecdotes.

1. Aṅgad observes how every night the goddess Durgā comes to massage the Gurū[4]
2. The maidservant's vision[5]
3. Bābā Nānak tests his Sikhs by scattering coins before them. Only two pass the test (one of them Lahaṇā and the other unnamed)[6]
4. Bābā Nānak tests the two Sikhs by commanding them to eat a corpse[7]
5. Aṅgad is installed as Gurū[8]

Two shabads are added to the cluster, neither of them integral to the narrative.[9] The compiler's chronological concern has also prompted the insertion of an anecdote concerning Sheikh Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā.[10]

All this appears to constitute a single tradition, developed by supplementing the original anecdotes with various sub-anecdotes. In contrast the *Ādi Sākhīs/B40* cluster is evidently a union of two such lines of development. One of these begins, like the *Puratan* tradition, with the original anecdotes and expands in the same manner. In addition to the supple-

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 94b, 96b, 97b.
[2] *Pur JS*, p. 108. *B40*, ff. 93a, 95a. See above, pp. 91-2.
[3] *Pur JS*, p. 107. *B40*, ff. 97b-98b.   [4] *Pur JS*, p. 107.   [5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., p. 108.   [7] Ibid.   [8] Ibid., p. 110.
[9] *Sirī Rāg* 3 is appended to the corpse-eating test, and Gurū Arjan's *Mājh* 18 is said to have been recited at the installation ceremony.
[10] *Pur JS*, pp. 108-10. The anecdote has been interpolated by the *Purātan* compiler at this point because it relates to the imminent death of Bābā Nānak.

mentary anecdotes already mentioned it adds a variant account of Gurū Aṅgad's installation and also a version of the Achal discourse. This tradition then unites with another issuing from different antecedents. The origin of this second contributory tradition is not an actual episode, but rather the ascetic ideal which, in accordance with the convictions of a particular group within the Sikh community, encouraged respect for faqīrs, celibacy, and withdrawal from worldly activity.[1] Elsewhere this ideal is expressed only as a gloss or as an interpretation laid upon an evolved anecdote. Here, however, it forms the basis of a small cluster incorporated within the larger Aṅgad cluster.

The smaller cluster has one principal component relating directly to the person of Gurū Aṅgad. This is the story of Aṅgad's loyal fortitude (an account of how he endured the torment of rain and cold in order to maintain a vigil while his Master was bathing).[2] The remainder relate to him less directly, but all involve his presence and emphasize his special status. Four anecdotes of this kind can be distinguished.

1. The story of Mūlā the Khatrī[3]
2. A course of austerities performed by Bābā Nānak[4]
3. Bābā Nānak's adoration[5]
4. Bābā Nānak seeks solitude[6]

The last of these narrates a series of stratagems adopted by Bābā Nānak at Gorakhnāth's suggestion to rid himself of the company of his disciples. First he imposes hard labour on them; next he reduces their food ration to vanishing point; thirdly he burns the harvest which they have so laboriously gathered; and finally, feigning madness, he threatens them with a dagger. (The last of these was evidently suggested by the theme of the shabad *Sirī Rāg* 29.) Although the origin of this series appears to be the ascetic emphasis upon the value of withdrawal it is implied at one point that the various stratagems are really tests designed to prove Aṅgad's worth.[7]

These two traditions were evidently recorded by the *Q2* compiler and then utilized by his *Ādi Sākhīs* and *B40* successors.[8] The only significant difference distinguishing the two successor versions of the common cluster is the omission from the extant *Ādi Sākhīs* of the 'Installation of Gurū Aṅgad' sākhī. This was probably present in an earlier recension of the *Ādi Sākhīs*, but omitted from the later recension because its redactor preferred another version of the same sākhī.

It was this preference which led to renewed contact between the *Ādi Sākhīs/B40* tradition and that of the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs. Although the precise source is not clear it appears that the *Ādi Sākhīs* redactor has used a version of the installation sākhī which finds expression in the *Purātan* tradition. This is the conclusion indicated by the same redactor's use of the corpse-eating sākhī, and even if some doubt must persist concerning

---

[1] See above, pp. 79–81.   [2] *B40*, ff. 104a–105a.   [3] *B40*, ff. 100b–101b.
[4] *B40*, ff. 102b–104a.   [5] *B40*, f. 106a–b.   [6] *B40*, ff. 106b–110a.
[7] *B40*, f. 107b.
[8] In the *Ādi Sākhīs* the two clusters appear as sākhīs 8b–d and 24–25e. *AS*, pp. 23–6, 76–84.

the installation sākhī the corpse-eating anecdote certainly provides a link between the two traditions. The two anecdotes are included in another supplementary cluster attached by the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler to the ascetic cluster. This later supplement comprises the following anecdotes:

1. A recitation of *Japjī*
2. Dead birds revivified: Bābā Nānak's remorse
3. An interview with God: recitation of the shabad *Sodar*
4. Bābā Nānak summons the Gangā to thirsty Sikhs
5. Bābā Nānak continues testing his Sikhs
6. The story of Vasiṣṭ
7. Aṅgad commanded to eat a corpse
8. The installation of Gurū Aṅgad.[1]

The first four anecdotes should be separated from the remainder, for they evidently represent an interpolation drawn from a *Miharbān* source.[2] The remainder consists of additional anecdotes which further expand the Aṅgad cluster of the *Ādi Sākhīs* first recension.

This composite *Ādi Sākhīs* cluster underwent one further expansion. The entire cluster has been recorded, with some further additions, in *Pothī Harijī* of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*.[3] There can be no doubt that it appears there as a relatively late addition to the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, and little doubt that the source must have been the second recension of the *Ādi Sākhīs*. The precise point of inclusion within the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* was probably determined by the earlier inclusion of a version of the Achal discourse. To the cluster was added an interview with God, and it is possible that one other anecdote included in this late *Miharbān* collection was also introduced at this time. This latter anecdote purports to describe a second marriage by Nānak.[4]

The extant *Miharbān* text represents the final stage in the evolution of the second tradition, just as the *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād* manuscripts provide a terminal point for the first. The two traditions diverge at an early stage and the only close link during the later stages of their respective developments is the small borrowing which appears in the second recension of the *Ādi Sākhīs*. There is, however, one other collection which combines elements drawn from both traditions. This is the account of Bābā Nānak's life given in the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak*. The *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak* of Kirpāl Dās Bhallā (or Kirpāl Siṅgh Bhallā) is distinguished above all by the measure of attention which it devotes to Khaḍūr village and to the person of Gurū Aṅgad. In view of this special interest it is not

---

[1] *AS*, pp. 85–98. A concluding death sākhī follows this cluster.

[2] See below, pp. 212–14.   [3] *Mih JS* II.66–156.

[4] In the interview with God (*Mih JS* II.152–6) Nānak is said to have reproached the Almighty for the status bestowed upon him at birth. When God replies that he was given the respected status of a Khatrī he responds with the shabad *Sirī Rāg* 29 which the *Ādi Sākhīs/B40* version sets a little earlier in the narrative. The interview concludes with a ringing assurance from God that all who enter Nānak's panth will find salvation. It seems that this addition to the earlier version should be interpreted primarily as an attempt to sustain Khatrī authority within the community. The apocryphal account of a second marriage (*Mih JS* II.141–3) may have been included in an intermediate recension of the *Ādi Sākhīs* and then dropped by the redactor responsible for the extant text.

surprising that its author should have utilized so much of the available Aṅgad material. The following anecdotes appear in the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak*:[1]

1. The meeting with Lahaṇā (*Ādi Sākhīs/B40* tradition)
2. Lahaṇā's clothes ruined
3. The birth of Lakhmī Dās and Sirī Chand
   (Both conceived in response to Aṅgad's intercession)
4. The loyal fortitude of Aṅgad
5. Aṅgad shakes sweets from a tree
6. Absolute loyalty
   Bābā Nānak asks Buḍhā and Aṅgad to tell the time during the night.
7. The coins test
8. The corpse-eating test
   (Buḍhā named as the other disciple)
9. Lahaṇā becomes Aṅgad
10. Aṅgad instructed to move to Khaḍūr
11. The adoration of Māī Birāī
12. Aṅgad's lost children: the return of Dāsū and Dātā
13. Perfect obedience
    Aṅgad, misunderstanding a command of Bābā Nānak, remains rooted to the same spot for several years.
14. Bābā Nānak reveals a freshwater well in Khaḍūr.

Two concluding sākhīs follow this large cluster of Aṅgad anecdotes. The first is the Bahā' al-Dīn anecdote which has been added to the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs; and the second is a version of Bābā Nānak's death which obviously derives from the tradition used by the *Ādi Sākhīs* and *B40* compilers.[2]

Although this lengthy list includes anecdotes drawn from both the main traditions outlined above it does not necessarily follow that Kirpāl Dās Bhallā was using any of the manuscripts which today represent either of the two Aṅgad clusters. It seems much more likely that his sources were oral (probably the oral tradition current in Khaḍūr during the early eighteenth century), and if in fact they included any manuscripts these are unlikely to have been any of those mentioned above. Whereas the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak* appears to have come from Khaḍūr the other manuscripts all seem to have been located further to the north-west. The text of the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak* also supports this conclusion. This pattern is represented diagrammatically in figure 15.

Example 11: Mardānā and Bālā
Dispersed references

The significant references to Gurū Aṅgad are almost all concentrated within three distinct clusters of sākhīs, and any attempt to understand his

[1] *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 77–84. *SLTGN(Pbi)*, pp. 41–4.
[2] *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 84–7. *SLTGN(Pbi)*, pp. 44–6.
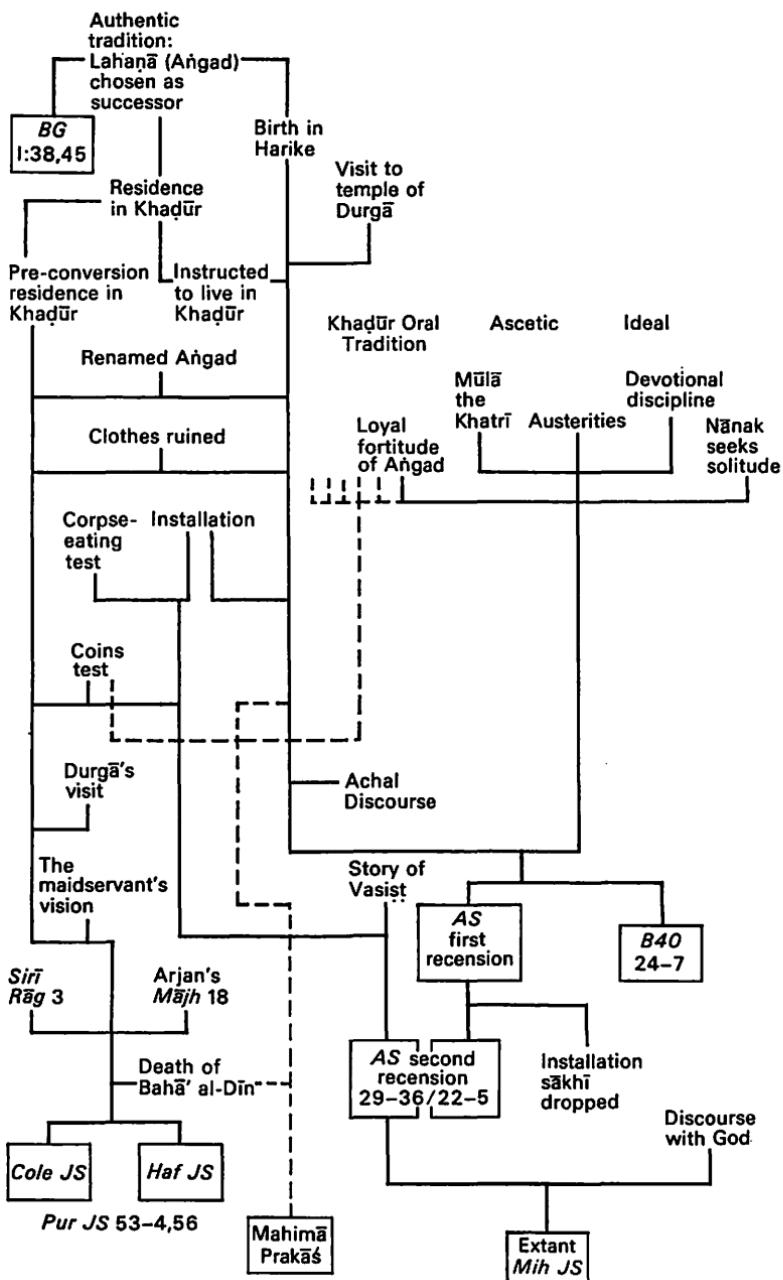
Figure 15

role within the janam-sākhīs need proceed little further than an analysis of this limited material. The *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* makes extensive use of him as an interlocutor, but for this purpose others could easily have been chosen. Gurū Aṅgad has, in most instances, been selected because for the later period of Bābā Nānak's life he could be regarded as a regular attendant upon his Master. The treatment of Mardānā and Bālā is, however, different and no single sākhī or cluster of sākhīs can adequately exemplify their roles.

Mardānā the Minstrel enjoys a particular prominence in modern accounts of the life of Gurū Nānak. This status he owes largely to the interest accorded him by the *Purātan* tradition. In other traditions his importance is considerably diminished, and in one significant source he is almost completely absent. The primitive tradition which will later be designated *Narrative III* mentions him only twice.[1] Within this tradition he is merely one of a number of companions to whom passing reference is made, with no special significance attached to his presence. He serves a purpose which could conceivably have been fulfilled by Ajittā Randhāvā or Gurū Aṅgad.

Mardānā acquires his distinctive function and corresponding prominence when the janam-sākhī narrators begin introducing into their anecdotes quotations from the works of Nānak. Almost all Nānak's numerous compositions are intended to be sung, and if the Gurū was to give utterance to them in the janam-sākhīs he would obviously require an accompanist as companion. Because Mardānā bore the title of Mirāsī (a low caste-grouping of Muslim minstrels) he was accordingly well suited to this role. This is not to suggest that Mardānā never existed. The united testimony of the janam-sākhī compilers suggests that his existence can safely be taken for granted and that he must have been intimately associated in some manner with Gurū Nānak. Moreover, it can be assumed that as a Mirāsī he must surely have participated as an accompanist in the hymn-singing (*kīrtan*) of the small community. It is the detailed description of his association with Gurū Nānak which cannot be taken for granted. These descriptions bear too close a correspondence to the function of Mardānā within the janam-sākhī narratives to permit any firm assumptions beyond the simple assurance that there must certainly have been an association of some sort.

For the janam-sākhī narrators Mardānā's distinctive function was that of minstrel to accompany the Gurū's singing. As the quotations from Nānak's works increase so too do Mardānā's appearances. This can be appreciated if the *Narrative III* sākhīs are compared with the source designated *Narrative I*.[2] The latter is a much more highly evolved tradition

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 158a–b, 164a. The number of references increases to four if *B40* sākhīs 56 and 57 (*B40*, ff. 219a–220a) are ascribed to the *Narrative III* tradition. For the *Narrative III* tradition see below, pp. 220–6. There is a passing reference to Mardānā at the beginning of sākhī 31, another of the *Narrative III* anecdotes. *B40*, f. 127b. This, however, occurs in a brief introduction which has been appended to the *Narrative III* sākhī, evidently by the *B40* compiler. The *Miharbān* version of the anecdote lacks the introduction. *Mih JS* I.231–2.

[2] See below, pp. 181 ff.

and as such it regularly includes suitable quotations in its sākhīs. Because *Narrative I* material has been extensively used by the *Purātan* compilers, and because their supplementary material is similarly evolved, scriptural quotation is a particularly common feature of the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs. Within this tradition Mardānā enjoys, in consequence, a particular prominence, a prominence which has been carried over into modern accounts as a result of the fondness for the *Purātan* source shown by Macauliffe and almost all his successors.

The process is well illustrated by example 4, 'The Rich Man's Pennants', where the *Purātan* narrator, having added a quotation from *Vār Āsā* also introduces Mardānā to accompany it.[1] This same feature may also be observed in the various versions of the anecdote entitled 'The Monster's Cauldron'. The *Ādi Sākhīs* text, which provides a version very close to the original proto-anecdote, includes no quotation from the works of Nānak and so makes no mention of Mardānā.[2] It is only when Gurū Arjan's shabad *Mārū* 14 is anachronistically introduced that Mardānā appears in the narrative.[3] If the examination is extended to other sākhīs it will be observed that Mardānā rarely participates in any active sense.[4] When he does it is in a manner which might well have indicated someone else.[5] In other words, he serves as one of a small panel of regular participants. It is only when the singing of shabads becomes a prominent feature that his importance escalates.

As time passed and interpretations shifted Mardānā gradually acquired a new role without abandoning his earlier function as minstrel. The earlier role continued to increase in importance as more quotations were introduced, and having acquired prominence in this manner he was increasingly used as a participant in preference to other regular candidates. His new role was, however, something distinctively different, one which he alone of the regular participants was fitted to play. As the janam-sākhīs developed their theme of recognition by both Hindus and Muslims of Nānak's divine status Mardānā was enlisted as a symbol of Muslim acceptance. This role has ever since gathered an increasing importance, strengthening the earlier emphasis of the *Purātan* tradition. As a result Mardānā now commands an eminence which stands in conspicuous contrast to his relative obscurity in the more primitive traditions. The fact

---

[1] See above, p. 126.

[2] *AS*, p. 28.

[3] *B40*, f. 40a. See above, pp. 76–7. The *Miharbān* version includes Mardānā without the shabad. *Mih JS* I.231. This version is, however, a relatively late addition to the *Miharbān* tradition, drawn from the *Ādi Sākhīs* or a source very close to it (i.e. from a source lacking both the shabad and Mardānā). See below, p. 202. It was interpolated at a point where Mardānā figures in the continuing narrative and where his absence would have seemed incongruous. *Miharbān* redactors normally noted this kind of inconsistency and it was presumably for this reason that they introduced Mardānā. In this late *Miharbān* version Mardānā's role undergoes a further extension. In order to avoid the necessity of putting Bābā Nānak in the cauldron later narrators make Mardānā suffer the indignity instead.

[4] *B40*, sākhīs 7, 8, 12a, 18a, 22, 37, and 57.

[5] The only exception amongst the *B40* sākhīs of this kind is number 57. This concerns Bābā Nānak's hymns and so indicates Mardānā as an obvious choice.

that as a Mīrāsī he could also serve as a symbol of the lower castes has in recent times provided him with yet another role.

It must be repeated that this analysis does not question the actual existence of Mardānā, nor should it imply that he was never a companion of Gurū Nānak. On the contrary, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that he certainly did exist and that he must have been an intimate associate of the Gurū. Bhāī Gurdās's references to him put this beyond doubt.[1] The conclusion which follows from the analysis is that this historical person must be distinguished from the functions which Mardānā performs in the janam-sākhī traditions. The activities narrated in the traditions should be related almost exclusively to these roles. Only occasionally can they reasonably and safely be connected with actual incidents in the life of the historical Mardānā.

The same conclusion should also be applied to the figure of Bālā, putative narrator of the janam-sākhīs which bear his name. Little significance attaches to the doubtful historicity of the actual person. It is his function which matters. Bālā's original function was to set a seal of authenticity upon the janam-sākhīs of a particular tradition. The janam-sākhīs of this tradition begin by claiming that Bālā was the constant companion of the Gurū on all his travels, and if this claim were to be accepted it would follow that the narrative which he delivers must be an authentic account. Later he too acquires a supplementary role, and in precisely the same manner as Mardānā. Just as Mardānā symbolizes Muslim acceptance, so too does Bālā serve as a symbol of Hindu acceptance. His presence is essential to complete the image, an image which retains its popularity to this day. When represented in visual form it depicts Bābā Nānak sitting in the centre, flanked by Mardānā and his *rabāb* on one side and Bālā with his peacock-feather whisk on the other.[2] It is a representation which epitomizes a fundamental aspect of the janam-sākhī message.

---

[1] *BG* I:35, XI:13.

[2] For an excellent example see Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. i (Princeton and London, 1963), plate facing p. 210.

10
SOURCES USED BY THE
JANAM-SĀKHĪ COMPILERS

In chapter 8 a brief description was given of the assembling and trans-
mission of janam-sākhī traditions. The concluding chapter of this section
on the origins and growth of the janam-sākhī traditions will examine
transmission procedures in greater detail. It will begin by postulating an
early grouping of sākhīs to form the first coherent traditions concerning
the life of Nānak. On the basis of this postulate it will attempt a descrip-
tion of the manner in which this primitive tradition must have expanded
and diversified. It will also indicate how certain versions of it came to be
consciously regrouped in order to provide a chronological sequence.
Finally, it will analyse at some length the process of selection from both
written and oral sources which constituted the method of later compilers.

All extant janam-sākhīs belong to the later stages of this pattern of
development. Although some of the earliest include substantial quantities
of material which must have been first recorded in the late sixteenth
century or early seventeenth century all are, in their extant form, products
of an augmented selection drawn from even earlier sources. The janam-
sākhī which retains the closest connection with the initial stages of the
pattern is the version recorded in the manuscript designated *LDP 194*.
Even this manuscript must, however, be classified with other early manu-
scripts. Like them it is patently an expanded version of an even earlier
tradition.

The fact that the janam-sākhīs are so obviously evolved works has natur-
ally suggested the existence of an 'original' janam-sākhī. Two claims have
been advanced in this respect. The earlier is based upon the express
declaration made at the beginning of all versions and recensions of the *Bālā*
tradition. All claim to record the words of an eye-witness to the life and
travels of Bābā Nānak.[1] The association of the *Bālā* tradition with the
schismatic Hindālīs occasionally prompted a measure of doubt concerning
the authenticity of the eye-witness claim, but until a century ago such
misgivings were rare. Santokh Singh suggested a solution to the problem
during the early nineteenth century by acting on the assumption that the
Hindālīs must have interpolated an earlier and authentic version of the
tradition.

A more recent claim dates from the discovery of the two principal
Purātan manuscripts (the *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād* janam-sākhīs). The
version which they record appeared to be an early one, lacking both the

[1] See above, pp. 16–18.

Hindālī taint and the more fanciful flights of Puranic fancy which charac-
terize the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs. It was accordingly accepted by many Sikh
scholars as the earliest of all extant versions. Vīr Singh and Macauliffe
expressed this conviction in the titles which they chose for their editions of
this version. For Vīr Singh it was the *Purātan Janam-sākhī*, or 'Ancient
Janam-sākhī', and for Macauliffe *The Most Ancient Biography of Bābā
Nānak*. It is, of course, evident that both the *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād*
manuscripts must be later recensions, but Macauliffe had referred to
another manuscript in his possession dated S. 1645 (A.D. 1588).[1] Others
have subsequently assumed that this must have represented either the
'original' janam-sākhī or a version very close to it. This point of view had
already been expressed by Trumpp following his discovery of the *Cole-
brooke* manuscript. The newly discovered janam-sākhī was, he declared,
'the fountain from which all others have drawn largely'.[2] Recently a
modified version of the same claim has been advanced by Professor Piār
Singh. This qualified version claims archetypal status not for the *Cole-
brooke* manuscript but for an earlier hypothetical recension of the same
tradition to which Piār Singh has attached the name *proto-Purātan Janam
sākhī*.[3]

The *Bālā* claim is specifically stated in the prologue appended to all
janam-sākhīs of this tradition. Bhāī Bālā, the putative narrator of the
tradition, is represented as a constant companion of Bābā Nānak.[4] If this
claim can be sustained it follows that the account which he is said to have
related in the presence of Gurū Aṅgad must be an eye-witness account
and the original janam-sākhī. It is, however, impossible to sustain the
claim. Several features of the *Bālā* tradition require positive rejection of
its self-proclaimed origins and its implied precedence over all other
traditions.

A major objection to the *Bālā* claim derives from the complete absence
of any reference to Bhāī Bālā in the works of Bhāī Gurdās (including his
Vār XI list of Gurū Nānak's more prominent disciples) or in any non-
Bālā janam-sākhī which predates the eighteenth century. Even the support
offered by eighteenth-century janam-sākhīs is of no consequence. The
portions of the extant *Gyān-ratanāvalī* which refer to Bālā are plainly
later additions;[5] and the sole reference in the earlier *Mahimā Prakāś* is far
removed from any suggestion of regular companionship.[6] This situation
could never have arisen if in fact Bhāī Bālā had occupied the position
claimed on his behalf by the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs.

A second objection concerns the ineptly contrived nature of the
explanatory prologue. It would be altogether inconceivable that Gurū
Aṅgad had never heard of one who had been a constant companion of
Bābā Nānak, or that the same companion should never have heard of his

---

[1] Macauliffe, i. lxxxvi. See above, p. 27.
[2] E. Trumpp, *The Ādi Granth* (London, 1877), p. ii.
[3] Piār Singh, 'A Critical Survey of Panjabi Prose in the Seventeenth Century' (unpublished
Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University, 1968), p. 80.
[4] See above, p. 16.   [5] *GNSR*, pp. 26–7.
[6] *SLTGN(Eng)*, p. 79. *SLTGN(Pbi)*, p. 42.

Master's successor. The date of the alleged encounter between the two (A.D. 1525) must also arouse some suspicion. Nānak died in A.D. 1538 or 1539.

Thirdly, it is evident from the structure of the janam-sākhī that its origins belong to a period which followed the assembling of the more rudimentary collections. The length and substance of the earliest *Bālā* travel itineraries, as implied in the prologue and worked out in the manuscripts, indicate that the originator or originators of the tradition were able to build upon earlier models.

There can be no doubt that some very early traditions have been preserved in several of the individual *Bālā* sākhīs, but equally there can be no doubt that the collection as a whole must belong to the middle seventeenth century, not to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Although Bālā himself may perhaps have been a real person, he could not have been a constant companion of the Gurū in the manner claimed by the tradition which bears his name. His function within this tradition is manifestly that of lending it the measure of authenticity which would be required in order to establish its pretensions over those of other traditions.

Although Macauliffe made some of the more obvious objections abundantly clear, the theory of an 'original' janam-sākhī delivered before Gurū Aṅgad did not die an immediate death. Vīr Singh was perhaps the most influential amongst those who suggested that the original version delivered in this manner must have been destroyed by the Hindālī authors of the *Bālā* tradition. Without making his interpretation entirely clear he seems to have reverted to the old theory, associated with the name of Santokh Singh, which explains the *Bālā* tradition as an interpolated version of this 'original' janam-sākhī.[1] If this were to be accepted it would mean that the identification and excision of all Hindālī references from the earliest extant *Bālā* manuscripts would leave something very close to the account narrated before Gurū Aṅgad. There is, however, no evidence whatsoever to support this nostalgic assumption. An analysis of the *Bālā* contents shows that it must be regarded as a middle-period product, a predecessor of the *Gyān-ratanāvalī* and the two *Mahimā Prakāś* versions but later than the earlier portions of all other major janam-sākhī traditions.

This leaves the claim to originality advanced on behalf of the *Purātan* version. The *Purātan* claim cannot be rejected in the same summary manner, although as it stands it must certainly be qualified. In its extant form the *Purātan* tradition is a highly evolved product, and if in fact there lies behind it an 'original' janam-sākhī the *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād* manuscripts are far removed from this prototype in terms of development.

---

[1] Vīr Singh, *Srī Gur Pratāp Sūraj Granthāvalī* (Amritsar, 1964), p. 54. Macauliffe fails to make his opinion clear, but seems to imply acceptance of the *Purātan* claims. The Hindālīs, he states, were able to destroy 'nearly all the older accounts of the life of Guru Nanak'. Macauliffe, i. lxxxiii. Later he declares the *Purātan* version to be 'beyond dispute the most trustworthy detailed record we possess of the life of Nanak'. Ibid., p. lxxxvii. The first statement implies the survival of at least one 'older' account and the second suggests that this is to be identified with the *Purātan* version. He does, however, add that the *Purātan* account is 'deformed by mythological matter' (ibid.), thereby implying a measure of corruption in the *Purātan* text.

An analysis of the sources used by this tradition and by a number of other janam-sākhīs does, however, suggest that the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs may be directly descended from a nucleus of sākhīs which constituted the earliest tradition concerning the life of Nānak. If this hypothetical nucleus is to be designated the 'original' janam-sākhī there must be a clear understanding that it did not constitute a janam-sākhī of the kind represented by extant collections. It must obviously have been something much more rudimentary than the surviving janam-sākhīs.

A comparison of the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs with *LDP 194*, the *B40 Janam-sākhī*, the *Ādi Sākhīs*, and the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* indicates that at some early date a small selection of anecdotes must have been grouped in a simple connected sequence. This cluster of primitive sākhīs will have constituted an archetype. In the following analysis of sources this earliest of all coherent collections will be referred to as the *Narrative I* tradition. The cluster was certainly small and almost certainly oral in its earliest version. This latter conclusion is implied by the absence of any manuscript version, by the obvious importance of oral tradition in the later development of the janam-sākhīs, and by analogy with similar collections of popular hagiography.

An important feature of this early nucleus will have been its links with authentic incidents from the actual life of Gurū Nānak. It is no accident that almost all of the few janam-sākhī constituents which withstand the test of vigorous historical analysis can be traced to this cluster. These authentic constituents, however, account for only a small proportion of the material included within the cluster. It is clear that the impulse to augment operated from the very beginning. This process will have followed the lines indicated by the analysis of individual sākhīs set out in chapter 9, and as a result of its operation the nucleus must have included appreciable quantities of legendary material by the time it emerged as a recognizable tradition. This need occasion no surprise. It is the basic myth which must retain its consistency, not the material which is used to give it expression.

Following the emergence of this first coherent tradition the augmenting impulse assumed complete control. Surviving memories which related to actual events were soon utilized in the continuing development of the tradition and within a short space of time were largely transformed by the addition of extra features, many of them essentially interpretative. Although passages from the works of Nānak continued to provide an indirect link, the sākhīs which were developed on the basis of such passages almost always related legendary rather than authentic anecdotes. In their choice of material the narrators responsible for the expansion of the earliest tradition were directed by the influence of traditional concepts, by the nature of the emergent community's needs, by its understanding of its role, and above all by the myth which justified and sustained its existence.

The consolidation of the first nucleus was thus followed by a rapid multiplication of anecdotes. Like the original nucleus these supplementary anecdotes will have originally developed as oral tradition. Many must

have remained unrecorded and, after circulating within a particular area, assimilated to associated traditions or gradually disappeared.

In this manner there developed a large and ever-increasing fund of oral anecdotes. Some will have had a restricted circulation within certain areas and amongst certain groups within the Sikh panth, whereas others obviously enjoyed a much wider circulation. At various points in time a particular congregation (*saṅgat*) or individual evidently perceived the benefits of possessing a recorded version of the current tradition. In response to this realization collections of anecdotes were compiled for the edification of the congregation. In the case of the *B40* manuscript this is specifically declared to have been the origin of the collection.[1]

Although recorded versions could not have kept pace with the proliferation of oral anecdotes, the expansion of oral tradition was inevitably followed by a corresponding expansion of the written tradition, later and more restricted in content. These documents presumably began to circulate during the latter half of the sixteenth century and certainly continued to grow in length and number during the centuries which followed. The process reached a climax during the last three decades of the nineteenth century in a period of rapid *Bālā* development. Since then it has weakened but never disappeared. Collections of anecdotes which are essentially janam-sākhīs still appear as 'biographies' of Nānak.

Whereas the earliest of these collections will necessarily have relied exclusively upon oral tradition for its source the extant manuscripts show a marked preference for existing manuscripts. Oral tradition continued, however, to provide a supplementary source of considerable importance. Once again the *B40* collection serves as an example. Although the original basis of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* has obviously been provided by the *Narrative I* tradition, the largest single source was evidently the oral tradition of the locality in which the collection was compiled. In the analysis of sources which follows this major supplementary source is designated *Narrative III*.

The differences which so plainly distinguish *Narrative I* material from *Narrative III* anecdotes demonstrate the composite nature of the *B40* collection. In other instances a compiler's preference will incline him strongly towards a single major source and in many cases he will have had no choice other than a single available manuscript. As a result most extant manuscripts can be associated with well-defined traditions. The *Hāfizābād* compiler, for example, shows a marked preference for the *Narrative Ia* source which issues in the *Colebrooke* janam-sākhī. Other copyists reproduced the same material, with its distinctive content and sequence. The distinctive selection and arrangement constitutes the *Purātan* tradition, and manuscripts which follow this version can all be classified as *Purātan* janam-sākhīs. Others belong to the equally distinctive *Miharbān*, *Bālā*, *Ādi Sākhīs*, *Gyān-ratanāvali*, or *Mahimā Prakāś* traditions.

One significant difference which distinguishes the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs and much of the *Miharbān* tradition from the others is their conspicuous

[1] *B40*, f. 84b.

lack of coherent chronological order.[1] In this respect the two traditions may reflect an earlier stage of development than the others. The earliest nucleus evidently possessed a recognizable order, but this was scarcely surprising as its content consisted largely of anecdotes concerning the childhood of Nānak. Only one sākhī related to the period in Sultānpur, one to his travels, one to his return, and perhaps one to his death. This imposed an obvious order upon the small cluster and all that remained was to add two miscellaneous anecdotes narrating incidents which had occurred in the Pañjāb.

If in fact the *Bālā* pattern represents a feature of early janam-sākhī compilation it means that at the earlier stage supplementary anecdotes drawn from oral tradition will have been added indiscriminately to the nucleus, the only deference to chronological sequence being a general grouping under the categories of childhood, manhood, and death. The obvious point at which the *Narrative I* cluster could be supplemented was its brief reference to Bābā Nānak's period of travels. The twelve years allocated to this period provided ample scope for expansion of the tradition and it is scarcely surprising that many anecdotes were introduced in order to fill the gap. Another such opportunity was provided by the period following Nānak's return from his travels, a period which he spent in the village of Kartārpur. Anecdotes relating to these periods must have been narrated with little regard for chronology, and only later could efforts have been made to order the generally incoherent collection into a chronological pattern.

This progression did not, of course, take place with a neat and orderly consistency. Whereas some janam-sākhī compilers have followed a developed chronological pattern others, contemporary or later, have paid heed to chronology only in the most general sense. There can be no doubt that the developed patterns have been devised by narrators who were adding to the nucleus, but it is not entirely clear at what stage this was done. All that can be affirmed is a tendency to develop increasingly intricate patterns, a process which reaches its most advanced phase in the chronology of the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs. The four major journeys (*udāsī*) of the *Purātan* tradition are evidently a later recording either of an earlier twofold pattern, or perhaps of a single travel narrative. The *Ādi Sākhīs* offer a travel narrative which groups a restricted number of anecdotes into a single journey; the *Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ* version of the *Miharbān* tradition (which evidently derives in part from the *Ādi Sākhīs* tradition) enlarges this to constitute two journeys; and the *Purātan* version, following the four points of the compass, devises four separate journeys. In all such instances the extra material required to fill out the itinerary has been added to the nucleus in the form of supplementary anecdotes.

Two distinct patterns have thus emerged as the collections of anecdotes have progressively expanded. One can be described as a pattern in only the loosest sense. Anecdotes are added singly or in small clusters with

---

[1] Chronological order is a feature of *Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ*, the first section of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, but not of the succeeding sections.

regard being paid to nothing more than the most rudimentary of chrono-
logical sequences. These are the essentially unstructured janam-sākhīs
which reach their climax in the twentieth-century collections of the *Bālā*
tradition. To this same category belongs the *B40 Janam-sākhī* and the two
versions of the *Mahimā Prakāś*. It should be added that their significant
resemblance to the *Bālā* tradition is confined to this feature.

The other pattern is represented by the *Ādi Sākhīs, Pothi Sach-khaṇḍ*
of the *Miharbān* tradition, the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs, and the *Gyān-
ratanāvalī*. These versions are, in varying degrees, structured according
to assumed chronologies. Sākhīs which occur indiscriminately in the *Bālā*
or *B40* versions are here regrouped in order to constitute a logical sequence.
None actually achieves the ultimate objective. The *Purātan* version, which
comes closest to it, misplaces some individual anecdotes and records at the
conclusion of its first journey a cluster of sākhīs which could more
logically be assigned to the conclusion of the fourth journey. One import-
ant feature which derives from this impulse to arrange a coherent sequence
is that anecdotes which in their earlier versions are unlocated are given
definite geographical settings in order to accommodate them within a
developed itinerary. This results in the same anecdote being set in
different places by different compilers. Bābā Nānak's encounter with
Sajjaṇ, for example, is located in South India by the *Miharbān* tradition
(which is here following the *Ādi Sākhīs* pattern); in or near the Pañjāb by
the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs; near Tulambā in Multān district by the *Bālā*
janam-sākhīs; and in Hastināpur by the *Gyān-ratanāvalī*.[1]

It was in this manner that the janam-sākhīs evolved. All are collections
of anecdotes, or of exegetical discourses strung on a loose sequence of anec-
dotes. Without exception the extant janam-sākhīs are either straight copies
of earlier manuscripts, or composite collections based upon an earlier manu-
script or manuscripts augmented with material drawn from current oral
tradition. All are ultimately descended from oral tradition and all, whether
directly or indirectly, represent the process of continuing expansion in
accordance with the evolving understanding of the Sikh community and
changes in its social patterns. In some instances a shift in understanding re-
flects the development of heretical notions within the community; in others
the emergence of new social customs or a reversion to earlier practice. The
introduction of new ideas into rural Pañjāb inevitably produced results
which become particularly pronounced in the nineteenth and twentieth
centuries, and the pressure of historical events, while reducing the
functional importance of the janam-sākhīs, also left an impress upon their
content. Finally (although this is much more difficult to document), it is
apparent that the growing Jaṭ ascendancy within the Panth made its mark
upon the development of the janam-sākhīs. This issue relates primarily to
the emergence and later the overwhelming dominance of the *Bālā*
tradition.

The process outlined above produced ever-expanding traditions with
their abundance of anecdote and their wealth of exegesis. To this expansive

[1] *GNSR*, pp. 117-18.

impulse most narrators added a concern for chronology and with varying results reordered the received tradition and its supplements into a coherent sequence.

It must be stressed that the various stages of this growth have, since the late sixteenth century, been developing simultaneously, and although the printing-press and the spread of education have done much to arrest the process it continues to this day. A concern for sequence must have been evident in some of the earliest collections, and the oral tradition continues to develop new anecdotes while shedding others which have lost their relevance. As in the case of early accessions the more recent additions reflect new needs and new influences, many of which can be identified. One twentieth-century writer relates how Nānak, while travelling west, proceeded as far as the city of Rome. There he conversed with 'the Popes' and denounced their Indulgences as hypocrisy.[1] It is not difficult to identify the source of this particular supplement to the tradition.

The next task must be to examine the extant janam-sākhīs in order to determine their sources and, in a more precise sense, their manner of compilation. In the section which follows the term 'source' refers to actual manuscripts from which later narrators drew material in compiling their own manuscripts or to distinct oral traditions which were utilized in the same way. The analysis will be selective, for it would require an account of considerable length and complexity to unravel the multitude of tangled strands which connect the various janam-sākhīs to their sources and to each other. Attention will be directed primarily to the sources of the *B40 Janam-sākhī*, and secondarily to those janam-sākhīs which bear a close relationship to it. It can, however, be claimed that the same principles apply to the janam-sākhīs which receive only passing notice, and that in some instances these other janam-sākhīs are obviously drawing from sources close to those used by the *B40* compiler. The chief disadvantage of the selective approach is that there exists a distinct cleavage within the corpus of janam-sākhī traditions, the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs standing on one side and most of the remainder on the other. A concentration on the *B40* sources places us firmly on the latter side. Although it can be insisted that the same principles apply to any analysis of the *Bālā* development, it must at the same time be acknowledged that the *Bālā* tradition warrants a separate treatment which in this study it will receive only in the most cursory sense.

NARRATIVE I

One of the reasons why the *B40 Janam-sākhī* has received scant attention in the past has been the persistent belief that it is merely another *Purātan* manuscript. Karam Singh, author of the celebrated *Kattak ki Visākh*, included in his list of *Purātan* manuscripts a copy dated S. 1790 which he had noticed in a Lahore bookshop.[2] There can be little doubt that the

---

[1] Lāl Singh, *Tavārīkh Gurū Khālsā Panth*, vol. i (Lahore, 1945), p. 140.
[2] Karam Singh, *Kattak ki Visākh* (Amritsar, 1913), p. 218 (misnumbered 118). See *B40(Eng)*, introduction, p. 1.

janam-sākhī which he saw on this occasion was the *B40* manuscript now in the India Office Library, and likewise there can be little doubt that he did no more than scan its opening folios. Others following his example have declared the *B40* manuscript to be a version of the *Purātan* tradition.

This misunderstanding has arisen because the opening sākhīs of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* do indeed correspond closely to the analogue recorded in the *Hāfizābād* manuscript of the *Purātan* tradition. It is also true that this correspondence extends to a few sākhīs which are included at other points in the *B40* collection. A more thorough scanning of the manuscript soon reveals, however, that much of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* is totally distinct from the *Purātan* version. The correspondence is generally consistent up to the point where Bābā Nānak leaves Sultanpur, and the next two *B40* sākhīs do occur elsewhere in the *Purātan* narrative, but thereafter the two versions diverge and further correspondence is only occasional.

The common source which provides the area of correspondence is not to be described simply as one amongst several sources of equal importance utilized by the *B40* compiler. It seems clear that the sākhīs which have entered the *B40* manuscript from this common source constitute the primary basis of the janam-sākhī. Furthermore, it appears that this common cluster of sākhīs carries us close to the earliest nucleus or proto-janam-sākhī. This nucleus we have already designated *Narrative I*. It appears in the *Ādi Sākhīs*, in the *B40 Janam-sākhī*, and in the *Hāfizābād* and *Colebrooke* manuscripts. It also appears, vastly augmented, in the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, and in a transformed but recognizable form in the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs. Later still it is included in the *Gyān-ratanāvalī*, and in every version of Nānak's life up to the most modern of accounts. The term *Narrative I* has been chosen because in its earliest version this nucleus must have consisted exclusively of simple narrative anecdotes. The figure *I* represents the assumption that it is upon the foundation provided by this cluster of anecdotes that all later janam-sākhīs have been erected.

Narrative I is, of course, a hypothesis. There exists no manuscript which corresponds exactly to our assumptions concerning its content and form. This is scarcely surprising, for it is clear that many manuscript records of janam-sākhī traditions have been lost, and a collection as crude as the early *Narrative I* version could hardly have appeared a strong candidate for preservation. Moreover, the *Narrative I* material must originally have circulated in oral tradition and even if the earliest recorded version had survived it would be unlikely to conform in all respects to the collection of simple anecdotes which constituted the initial form of the *Narrative I* cluster.

A hypothesis is, however, necessary in order to begin a reconstruction of the janam-sākhī sources, and apart from this *Narrative I* postulate there appears to be no satisfactory way of explaining both the relationship which links the various janam-sākhīs and also the differences distinguishing common anecdotes which are plainly amongst the earliest to have entered their narratives. This applies with particular force to the *Ādi Sākhīs*,

B40, Colebrooke, and *Hāfizābād* janam-sākhīs. It is also strongly supported by the form and content of *LDP 194,* and it may be possible to derive further support from the evident fact that almost all of the anecdotes with some claim to historical authenticity are to be found in this group.

The elements which, according to this hypothesis, constituted the earliest collection of the *Narrative I* tradition are the following:

1. Anecdotes concerning the birth and childhood of Nānak
2. Bābā Nānak's employment in Sultānpur
3. His travels and return to Talvaṇḍī
4. A visit to Pāk Paṭṭan to meet Sheikh Ibrāhīm, the successor of Sheikh Farīd
5. Bābā Nānak's presence at Bābur's sack of Saidpur
6. An encounter with a rājā named Śivanābh.

Certain features may be noted in this collection. First, there is a heavy concentration upon Nānak's childhood and early manhood. (Item 1, unlike the remainder, embodies several anecdotes.) Secondly, the few remaining anecdotes almost all relate explicitly to places within or very near the Pañjāb (Talvaṇḍī, Pāk Paṭṭan, and Saidpur). This observation may also apply to the encounter with Śivanābh. The belief that Śivanābh resided in Sri Lanka is certainly a much later addition to the tradition,[1] and the *Miharbān* references to this rājā suggest that an unspecified location 'over the sea' is also the product of later development.[2] Thirdly, there is only one travel sākhī.

This outline probably corresponds closely to the earliest tradition concerning the life of Nānak. It reflects, in the first place, a predictable interest in childhood anecdotes, with a strong emphasis upon the early manifestations of Nānak's greatness. Such episodes exercise a particular fascination in the development of legend and hagiography, and in this case the impulse will have been strengthened by an authentic knowledge of Nānak's family connections. It must, however, be remembered that these anecdotes will have been fewer in number and appreciably simpler in form than those contained in the versions recorded by our extant janam-sākhīs.

A second factor reflected by the hypothetical content of the earliest *Narrative I* tradition is an authentic knowledge concerning not merely the family connections of Bābā Nānak but also his adult life in the Pañjāb. An analysis of individual sākhīs has suggested that authentic episodes probably lie behind the accounts of the Gurū's experiences in Sultānpur, Pāk Paṭṭan, and Saidpur.[3] Although the conclusion cannot be set beyond all doubt, there exists in these instances a degree of probability which is conspicuously absent from almost all other janam-sākhī anecdotes.

These fragments of knowledge concerning the Gurū's life within or near the Pañjāb are set in contrast to a lack of information concerning his period of travels. It was obviously known to his later disciples that he had undertaken a lengthy journey beyond the Pañjāb, but apart from this

---

[1] *GNSR,* pp. 114–17. See above, p. 162.   [2] *Mih JS* II.1, 65–6.
[3] *GNSR,* pp. 106–10, 132–8, 140.

general statement there was evidently little that could be added from authentic knowledge. The small supplement must have included a tradition that Mardānā the Bard had accompanied him, for the single travel sākhī which can be included within the cluster centres upon the figure of Mardānā. It would, however, be rash to read too much into this emphasis or to assert on this basis that Mardānā did, in actual fact, accompany the Gurū wherever he went. Mardānā is absent from many of the later traditions relating to the period of travels and in most instances his entry into a particular anecdote can be explained by the function which he fulfils in the structure of the narrative. Although it would certainly be going too far to claim that Mardānā never existed, and although the tradition that he accompanied Nānak *may* be correct, it is nevertheless necessary to treat his appearances with some caution. His inclusion within the travel sākhī of *Narrative I* may possibly indicate that we have not pushed our hypothesis back far enough, that we have instead permitted an early development to appear as an element of the original tradition.

The same degree of caution is required in the case of the claim that Bābā Nānak travelled for twelve years. This appears in the earlier extant versions of the *Narrative I* tradition.[1] The fact that twelve years was a conventional figure for such pilgrimages suggests, however, that the earliest narrators did not actually know the extent of Nānak's travels in terms of years any more than they knew it in terms of his itinerary.

There is thus a distinct possibility that our hypothetical *Narrative I* nucleus, though primitive in form and brief in length, may nevertheless contain later elements. Later elements are certainly present in all extant versions of the *Narrative I* tradition, and for this reason it must be stressed that the earliest expression of this tradition would not have corresponded to any of the texts which are now available. In the *B40 Janam-sākhī* the *Narrative I* material is reproduced in the following sākhīs:

Narr. I	B40	
1.	1.	The Birth of Nānak
	2a.	Instruction by the Paṇḍit
	2b.	Bāba Nānak's Betrothal and Marriage
	3.	The Ruined Crop Restored
	4a.	The Tree's Stationary Shadow
	5.	Bābā Nānak's Discourse with the Physician
2.	6a.	Sultānpur
	6b.	Immersion in the River
	6c.	Bābā Nānak's Discourse with Daulat Khān's Qāzī
3.	7.	Bābā Nānak's Travels in the Uninhabited Wilderness
	8.	Bābā Nānak returns to Talvaṇḍī
4.	17.	Bābā Nānak's Discourse with Sheikh Braham
5.	18a.	The Sack of Saidpur
6.	34b.	Bābā Nānak and Rājā Śivanābh.

[1] *B40*, f. 221a. *AS*, p. 44. *Pur JS*, p. 48.

Certain elements contained within clusters as they appear in the *B40 Janam-sākhī* are certainly later additions to the earlier tradition. To sākhī 6, for example, there has been appended an account of Nānak's departure from Sultānpur which is obviously an expansion of the tradition.[1] Other versions of the same sākhī lack it and the fact that it consists largely of hymns attributed to Nānak indicates a later development. This amounts in practice to the addition of an extra sākhī, a feature which also appears in the *B40* version of the Saidpur visit. In this latter instance there has been introduced a discourse with Bābur based on current Sūfī tradition and upon references in Gurū Nānak's own works.[2] Elsewhere the expansion is evidently to be found in the addition of extra details to a primitive version of a sākhī. It has already been observed how most of the quotations from Gurū Nānak's shabads and shaloks have been interpolated at a later stage. All extant janam-sākhīs bear this impress. *LDP 194* illustrates a slighly less developed version than that of the *B40 Janam-sākhī*, whereas the *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād* manuscripts both represent a more advanced enlargement.

This differential development in the various janam-sākhī versions indicates that the elements responsible for the expansion of the original nucleus entered the tradition at different points in time. A comparison of the texts enables us to determine a sequence for these additions. It seems likely that the discourse 'The True Field and the True Merchandise', evolved out of the shabad *Sorath 2*, must have been added to the cycle of childhood anecdotes soon after the original nucleus first emerged in a coherent form.[3] 'A Discourse with Bābur' obviously entered the tradition later, and 'Bābā Nānak's Departure from Sultānpur' is evidently an even later addition made by the *B40* copyist himself.

Division of the Narrative I *tradition:* Narrative Ia

Another important development which becomes evident from a comparison of the *B40* and *Colebrooke* janam-sākhīs is a division of the *Narrative I* tradition. It is immediately clear from this comparison that although both versions contain *Narrative I* material they have received it through different lines of descent. The line which eventually issues in the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* we shall designate *Narrative Ia*. The other series of recensions, descending to the *B40 Janam-sākhī*, we shall designate *Narrative Ib*. This latter line also emerges in *LDP 194* and the *Ādi Sākhīs*. Both lines reunite in the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*.

Narrative Ia evidently developed in the following manner. The primitive *Narrative I* nucleus, having already undergone a limited measure of expansion before the division, subsequently received a substantial accession of extra anecdotes and discourses. Most of the supplementary material related to the period of Nānak's travels, an area which inevitably commanded a particular interest. This interest it attracted partly because

---

[1] *B40*, sākhī 6d, ff. 24b–27b.   [2] *B40*, sākhī 18b, ff. 70a–73b (1).
[3] In the *B40* manuscript this discourse appears as the second part of sākhī 4. *B40*, ff. 9b–13b.

it had been left unfilled by the earlier tradition and partly because it provided unrivalled scope for the more fanciful variety of anecdote. The development or appropriation of anecdotes set within the Pañjāb was still inhibited by first-hand knowledge of the area and, to some extent, by authentic memories concerning the Gurū's life there amongst his disciples. The period of travels was, in contrast, largely devoid of such inhibitions. This feature will account for certain elements which figure prominently in the supplementary material, and others can be explained by the evident and altogether reasonable assumption that the Gurū, in the course of his travels, must certainly have visited some of the more important centres of Hindu pilgrimage. The same assumption also extended, with rather less justification, to the far-flung centres of Muslim pilgrimage.

First-hand experience and authentic memory did not, of course, constitute an insuperable barrier to the development of anecdotes and discourses set within the Pañjāb. Although such anecdotes are not as numerous as the travel sākhīs they are by no means absent. Expansion of the childhood narratives also takes place, and in all three areas (childhood, the period of travels, and adult life in the Pañjāb) there are to be found the characteristic constituents from which the janam-sākhīs draw their supplements. This supplementary material will have been entering oral tradition ever since the death of Nānak. From this fund of oral anecdotes a selection has been added to a recorded version of the *Narrative I* tradition. In this manner the *Narrative I* tradition acquired the distinctive form designated *Narrative Ia*.

There is no clear evidence of the order in which these supplementary sākhīs entered the recorded tradition and if it is suggested that there was a series of accessions in clusters it must at once be added that this is still in the nature of conjecture. It does, however, seem a likely conjecture, for several of the supplementary sākhīs are evolved products which have a history of development behind them. The *Colebrooke* version of the Mecca sākhī is an example. It has already been demonstrated, by means of a comparison with other versions, that the *Colebrooke* Mecca narrative represents a conflation of three separate anecdotes, one of which seems originally to have been set in a different context.[1] A comparison already drawn between two versions of the 'Rich Man's Pennants' sākhī similarly reveals that the *Colebrooke* version is a more highly evolved product than its *B40* analogue.[2] The fact that these sākhīs appear in conjunction with such primitive anecdotes as 'A Watchman Receives Royal Authority'[3] suggests that the latter variety represents a later borrowing from oral tradition.

Other distinctive points may be briefly noticed. The anecdote 'Bābā Nānak's Travels in the Uninhabited Wilderness', which constituted a single sākhī in the *Narrative I* nucleus, has, in the *Narrative Ia* tradition, been split into two parts.[4] Both portions have been expanded and between

[1] See above, pp. 137–41.   [2] See above, pp. 124–7.
[3] *Pur JS*, sākhī 20, p. 30. *GNSR*, p. 40.
[4] *Pur JS*, sākhīs 12 and 30, pp. 20–1, 46–8. *GNSR*, pp. 38, 42–3.

them seventeen travel sākhīs have been inserted in order to construct the 'Eastern Journey' of the *Colebrooke* version. The anecdote concerning Rājā Śivanābh has been expanded but still lacks the introductory portion which later enters the *Purātan* tradition through the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*.[1] Quantities of scriptural quotation have been added at many

**Oral Traditions
concerning Bābā Nānak**

Narrative I

Narrative Ia

Cole JS
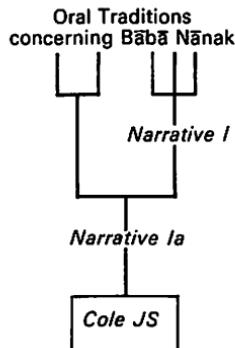
Figure 16

points,[2] and the entire collection has been arranged in the distinctively *Purātan* sequence with its travel itinerary based on the four points of the compass. This sequence obviously derives from the *Narrative Ia* line of development, not from the *Narrative Ib* line with which it is linked in the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*.

It was in this manner that the *Narrative I* tradition, augmented with numerous additional sākhīs and ordered into a particular pattern, followed a line of development which ultimately produced the celebrated *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*. This development may be diagrammatically illustrated as in figure 16. The precise location of this *Narrative Ia* development has not been determined, but the distinctly Poṭhohārī element in the language of the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* suggests that the tradition may have evolved in the area around Rāwalpiṇḍī.

Division of the Narrative I *tradition:* Narrative Ib

During the period of *Narrative Ia* growth the *Narrative I* nucleus had meanwhile been undergoing a variant development, probably in an area south-east of Rāwalpiṇḍī. To the original cluster a different selection of supplementary sākhīs had been added. In this case the supplement was evidently much smaller and the number of recensions appears to have been fewer. This was the line of development which we have designated *Narrative Ib*. To the original nucleus were added a discourse with Bābur;

---

[1] *Pur JS*, pp. 74–8.

[2] Several of the scriptural quotations included in the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* must have been added to the nucleus before the distinctive *Narrative Ia* tradition began to evolve.

an account of how a proud karoṛī, having been humbled by the Gurū, donated the land on which the village of Kartārpur was erected; and a story which related how contact with Rājā Śivanābh had first been established by a Khatrī disciple of Bābā Nānak.[1] It seems likely that the cluster of anecdotes which appear in the *B40* manuscript as sākhīs 10–14 were also derived by the *B40* compiler from his *Narrative Ib* source,[2] and it is possible that he may have obtained his version of the Achal discourse from the same manuscript.[3]

In addition to the extra anecdotes there was also expansion of the material inherited from the *Narrative I* nucleus in a manner distinguishing it from the *Narrative Ia* treatment of the same material. This certainly happened in the case of the original portion of the Śivanābh sākhī. Some extra quotations from the works of Nānak were added to those which had already entered the parent tradition, and, inevitably, numerous variant readings of lesser significance distinguished *Narrative Ib* renderings of common sākhīs from their *Narrative Ia* analogues.

The earliest extant example of the *Narrative Ib* tradition is provided by the manuscript *LDP 194*, a collection which consists of the original nucleus, together with the *Narrative Ib* supplement noted above. The supplement includes both the Achal and the Kaliyug sākhīs, but in a position which may indicate that they were additions to the manuscript by its copyist rather than integral parts of his *Narrative Ib* source. Both occur at the conclusion of the narrative portion of the manuscript, and the Achal sākhī is actually set within a lengthy section which otherwise comprises only scriptural quotation.[4] Because this section is so obviously a supplement to a basic *Narrative Ib* source it may follow that at least the Achal sākhī, and perhaps also the immediately preceding Kaliyug sākhī,[5] should be regarded as parts of the supplement rather than as elements of the basic source. On the other hand, the possibility that they may have belonged to the *Narrative Ib* tradition should not be obscured.

This same *Narrative Ib* tradition reappears in the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*, where only a selective use has been made of it. The *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī* is primarily based upon the *Narrative Ia* tradition. It is clear, however, that the *Hāfizābād* compiler also had access to a *Narrative Ib* manuscript. This he collated with his *Narrative Ia* text, a text which if not actually the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* must have been a manuscript very close to it. The *Hāfizābād* compiler obviously followed the longer *Narrative Ia* manuscript in preference to his *Narrative Ib* manuscript, and whenever a common sākhī appeared it was the *Narrative Ia* version which he copied. Only at points where the *Narrative Ib* manuscript recorded material missing from *Narrative Ia* did he turn to it. Having

---

[1] In the *B40* janam-sākhī these *Narrative Ib* sākhīs appear as numbers 18b, 19, and the first portion of 34. *B40*, ff. 70a–75a. 138b–145a.

[2] See below, pp. 192–4.

[3] Although a version of the Achal discourse may well have formed a part of the *Narrative Ib* tradition it seems much more likely that the *B40* compiler used a different source for this particular sākhī. See below, pp. 198 ff.

[4] *LDP 194*, ff. 56a–117b.   [5] Ibid., ff. 49a–54a.

copied the extra material he immediately reverted to his *Narrative Ia* source.

It is this feature which explains the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*'s illogical placement of the introduction to the Śivanābh sākhī. In the briefer *Narrative Ib* manuscript the Śivanābh sākhī followed immediately after the story of the converted karoṛī. The Karoṛī anecdote was not to be found in the *Narrative Ia* recension and so had to be added to the new composite version. The *Narrative Ib* tradition had also attached an introduction to the Śivanābh sākhī (the story of the Khatrī disciple noted above). This introductory portion was retained in its *Narrative Ib* position by the *Hāfizābād* compiler and so follows immediately after the Karoṛī sākhī in the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*.[1] The second portion of the *Narrative Ib* Śivanābh sākhī was, however, dropped in accordance with the compiler's preference for *Narrative Ia* versions wherever available. The *Narrative Ia* version comes later, having been allocated a position in the 'Southern Journey' narrative,[2] and the *Hāfizābād* compiler records it when he reaches it in his *Narrative Ia* source.

In this manner the *Narrative I* tradition reunited in the composite *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*, although in a fashion which involved a much greater dependence upon the longer and more evolved *Narrative Ia* line of development than upon the *Narrative Ib* line. The result was the so-called *Purātan* tradition, which in spite of obvious links must be distinguished from such distinctively *Narrative Ib* janam-sākhīs as *LDP 194*. The diagrammatic representation can now be extended as in figure 17.

This analysis is confirmed by a comparison of the two major *Purātan* manuscripts (i.e. the *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād* janam-sākhīs) with the *B40 Janam-sākhī*. Two conclusions follow from the comparison. First, it is clear that the *B40* compiler did not have access to the *Colebrooke* manuscript, nor to any other recension of the *Narrative Ia* tradition. Wherever the *B40* and *Colebrooke* janam-sākhīs contain analogues which cannot have existed in any *Narrative Ib* recension the *B40* version diverges widely from *Colebrooke*.[3] In such instances it is clear that the *B40* compiler derived his versions from sources other than the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* or its immediate antecedents.

Secondly, in contrast with this marked divergence from *Colebrooke* analogues, there is a remarkably close correspondence in the case of precisely those sākhīs which the *B40 Janam-sākhī* shares with the *Hāfizābād* manuscript but which are missing from the *Colebrooke* manuscript. In other words, the *B40* and *Hāfizābād* compilers agree when recording *Narrative Ib* sākhīs which were not included in the *Narrative Ia* tradition, but disagree when recording sākhīs which are common to both *Narrative Ia* and *Narrative Ib* (i.e. the sākhīs which must have been incorporated in the earlier *Narrative I* tradition before it branched into

---

[1] *Pur JS*, p. 74. *GNSR*, p. 46.   [2] *Pur JS*, pp. 86–90. *GNSR*, p. 48.
[3] Cf. 'The Monster's Cauldron' (*B40*, f. 40a–b; *Pur JS*, pp. 81–2), the Mecca anecdotes (*B40*, ff. 51b–52b, 133a–135a; *Pur JS*, pp. 98–104), 'The Country Ruled by Women' (*B40*, ff. 83a–85b; *Pur JS*, pp. 33–7), 'The Meeting with Lahaṇā' (*B40*, ff. 94b–99a; *Pur JS*, pp. 106–8), etc.
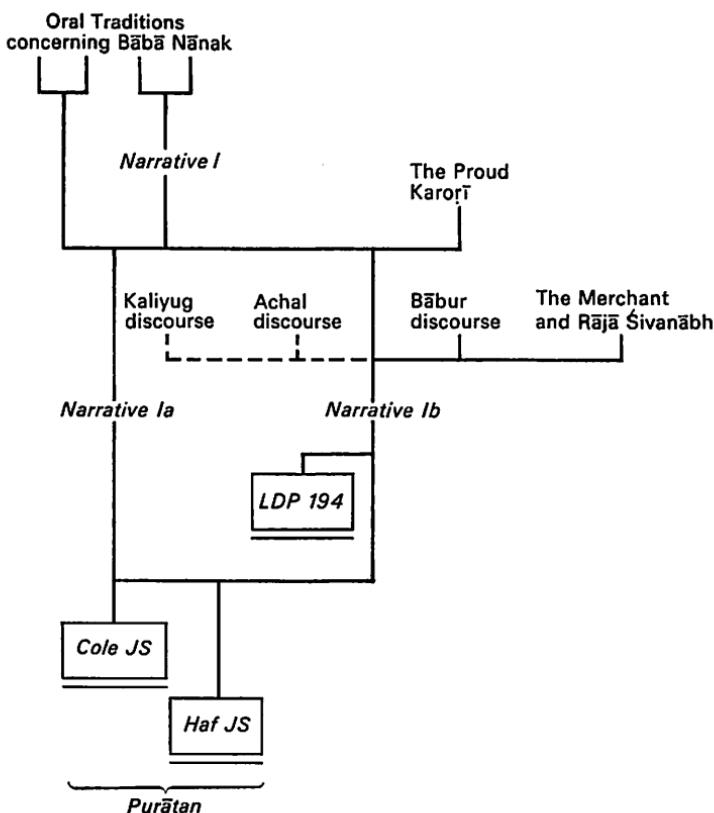
Figure 17

the two derived traditions). This can only mean that whereas the *Hāfizā-bād* compiler used a *Narrative Ib* manuscript as a mere supplement to his *Narrative Ia* source, the *B40* compiler regarded his *Narrative Ib* manuscript as a basic source, following it as far as it would take him and finding his supplements in non-*Narrative I* sources. Where the *Hāfizābād* compiler abandoned his *Narrative Ib* source in preference for *Narrative Ia*, the *B40* compiler adhered to it. This appears to be the obvious explanation for the pattern which emerges from a comparison of the *B40* and *Hāfizābād* janam-sākhīs, a pattern of close correspondence in some sākhīs and variant versions in others.

The degree of correspondence which distinguishes the *B40* and *Hāfizābād* readings of *Narrative Ib* sākhīs is so close that with only rare exceptions it amounts to a virtual identity. This suggests that the *B40* and *Hāfizābād* compilers must have had access to the same *Narrative Ib* manuscript. In the case of the Karoṛī sākhī only two differences of any

significance emerge from a comparison of the *B40* and *Hāfizābād* texts, both of them evidently brief additions made to the source manuscript by the two later compilers. During the course of the narrative the *B40* compiler inserts a sentence which the *Hāfizābād* text lacks: *tā karoṛie kahiā ju nānaku vaḍā maradu hai* ("'Nānak is a great man," declared the karoṛī').[1] The second addition appears in the *Hāfizābād* text. Towards the end of the sākhī it repeats a sentence which the *B40* manuscript records only once: *bābā bahut khusī hoā* ('Bābā [Nānak] was filled with joy').[2] The former instance represents the kind of pious aside which so easily creeps into later recensions of any hagiographic tradition, and the latter is plainly a simple mistake by the *Hāfizābād* copyist.

Correspondence of such remarkable closeness suggests that the two compilers must have used a common source. This hypothetical manuscript we shall designate *Q1*. The existence of such a manuscript derives further support from hints concerning the original localities of the *Hāfizābād* and *B40* manuscripts. The *Hāfizābād* manuscript, as its name indicates, was discovered in Hāfizābād, a small town in Gujranwālā District. Although the *B40* manuscript first appears in a Lahore bookshop, internal evidence points to a location within Gujranwālā District, or perhaps the adjacent Gujrāt District, as a likely place of origin.[3] The convergence upon a limited geographical area renders the copying of a single manuscript by two different compilers entirely possible. Manuscript copies of janam-sākhīs would not be common, and if a *saṅgat* or individual within any particular area possessed such a manuscript neighbouring *saṅgats* would presumably be aware of its existence and, if proposing to acquire a janam-sākhī for their own use, would quite naturally turn to it as a source. *Q1* can accordingly be located in, or very near, Gujranwālā District.

After *LDP 194*, *B40*, and *Hāfizābād* the *Narrative Ib* tradition next appears in the *Ādi Sākhīs*. Although there can be no doubt that the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler utilized a *Narrative Ib* source it is clear that his source was not *Q1*, at least not in an immediate sense. The *Ādi Sākhīs* analogue is longer and more developed than the version which derives directly from *Q1*. As the date given for its compilation (A.D. 1701) is earlier than that of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* (A.D. 1733) it seems more reasonable to postulate another *Narrative Ib* version which developed more rapidly during the late seventeenth century and emerged in a relatively mature form at the beginning of the eighteenth century. This suggests the pattern in figure 18. It will be observed that *LDP 194* has been affiliated with the *Q1* group rather than with the *Ādi Sākhīs*. This relationship is indicated by a comparison of the three texts.

To this extent the *Narrative Ib* tradition can be defined with reasonable assurance. There seems to be little doubt that the following anecdotes common to the *B40 Janam-sākhī* and the *Ādi Sākhīs* must have been taken from separate recensions of the tradition.

---

[1] *B40*, f. 74b.
[2] *Pur JS*, p. 74.
[3] See *B40(Eng)*, Introduction pp. 19–25.
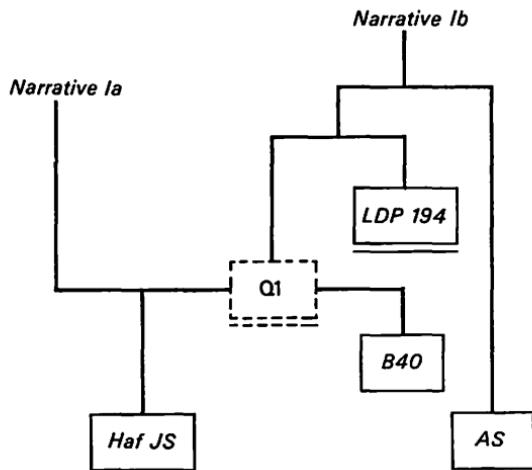
Figure 18

B40	Ādi Sākhis	
1	2a.	The Birth of Nānak
2a.	2b.	Instruction by the Paṇḍit
2b.	3a.	Bābā Nānak's Betrothal and Marriage
3.	3b.	The Ruined Crop Restored
4a.	4.	The Tree's Stationary Shadow
4b.	5a.	The True Field and the True Merchandise
5.	5b.	Bābā Nānak's Discourse with the Physician
6a.	6.	Sultānpur
6b.	7a.	Immersion in the River
6c.	7b.	Bābā Nānak's Discourse with Daulat Khān's Qāzī
7.	8a.	Bābā Nānak's Travels in the Uninhabited Wilderness
8.	16.	Bābā Nānak returns to Talvaṇḍī
17.	17.	Bābā Nānak's Discourse with Sheikh Braham
18a.	18.	The Sack of Saidpur
18b.	19.	A Discourse with Bābur
19.	20.	The proud Karoṛī humbled
34a.	21a.	The Merchant and Rājā Śivanābh
34b.	21b.	Bābā Nānak and Rājā Śivanābh

Possible B40 *borrowings from the* Narrative Ib *tradition*

In the case of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* the anecdotes listed above were
evidently copied from Q1. To this list the following should perhaps be
added:

10.   The Monster's Cauldron
11.   Bholā the Robber

12a. The Encounter with Kaliyug
12b. Lamenting Women Commended
13. A Poor Sikh's Devotion
14. Mecca: the moving *miharāb*.

These six anecdotes obviously constitute a distinct cluster drawn by the *B40* compiler from a single source. This is indicated not only by the fact that they have been recorded as a group, but also by a general correspondence in terms of language, structure, and stage of development. The same distinctive verb-endings recur (notably *dā* followed by *thā* in the Imperfective past tense), Imperfective participles are commonly repeated, and some characteristic expressions are to be noted. These include *merā gunāhu bakhashie, charani lāuṇā, jāi baiṭhā*, and *pairi paiā* followed by *kharā hoiā*. The narrative style manifests a considerable degree of homogeneity and there appears to be no doubt that the *B40* compiler must have taken the six anecdotes from a single source.

Was this source the *Q1* manuscript? Arguments based upon language and style are inconclusive. Although the cluster does indeed correspond in general terms to *Narrative Ib* language and style, the distinctive features noted in the preceding paragraph are less prominent in other *Q1* material. A comparison of the cluster with recognizably *Q1* sākhīs leaves the question open.

A more serious objection is raised by the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*. The *Hāfizābād* compiler, who also had access to *Q1*, fails to reproduce any of the six anecdotes in the same versions as the *B40 Janam-sākhī*. In the case of sākhīs 10, 11, 12a, and 14 this can be easily explained by a preference for the *Narrative Ia* analogues which he does in fact use, but this still leaves sākhīs 12b and 13.

Although these two *Hāfizābād* omissions cannot be altogether dismissed they are at least amenable to plausible explanations. Sākhī 12b, consisting of only a few sentences, may have been omitted by the *Hāfizābād* compiler because it was attached to the Kaliyug anecdote. The *Hāfizābād* compiler follows his *Narrative Ia* source both for the Kaliyug anecdote and for its successor. Under these circumstances it would scarcely be surprising if he were to follow through without interrupting the *Narrative Ia* text.

The omission of sākhī 13 can be explained in a different way. In order to purchase food for Bābā Nānak the poor Sikh of sākhī 13 voluntarily removes his hair and sells it in the market.[1] The objection to hair-cutting which receives such prominence during the eighteenth century was certainly upheld by many Sikhs during the seventeenth century, and if the *Hāfizābād* compiler shared this particular conviction he would have had a compelling reason for regarding the anecdote as mischievous.

These conjectures offer possible reasons for the omission of the two anecdotes by the *Hāfizābād* compiler. To them can be added the fact that the *B40* compiler records this cluster between two substantial blocks of *Q1* material. It is true that the cluster is immediately preceded by a single sākhī which is certainly not from the *Narrative Ib* tradition and that it is

[1] *B40*, f. 49a.

immediately followed by another two such sākhīs.[1] Elsewhere, however, the *B40* compiler interrupts one of his major sources in precisely this manner.[2] If we assume a separate source for this cluster we must also envisage a compiler with access to several manuscripts, abandoning one such manuscript for another and then reverting to the first for another run of sākhīs. This is by no means an impossibility, but it seems less likely than a continuation of the same basic manuscript. The cluster comprising sakhis 10–14 of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* will accordingly be assigned to the *Narrative Ib* tradition and specifically to the *Q1* manuscript. It must, however, be emphasized that this represents a cautiously tentative conclusion. The possibility of a separate, independent source should not be overlooked.

One further complication should be briefly noted before leaving the cluster. Three of its anecdotes have analogues in the *Ādi Sākhīs* and in all three instances the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler has used a source distinct from the *Narrative I* tradition.[3] This may perhaps mean that the cluster was added to the received *Narrative Ib* tradition by the *Q1* compiler or by a predecessor. Indeed, there may have been supplements added by both. The fact that *LDP 194* includes the Kaliyug sākhī may perhaps indicate that the six anecdotes were not added to the *Narrative Ib* tradition simultaneously.

Narrative I *material in the* Miharbān Janam-sākhī

Before leaving the *Narrative I* tradition reference should be made to its influence upon the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*. It appears that an early recension of the *Narrative Ib* tradition must have been used by the first of the *Miharbān* compilers, or perhaps by a redactor who closely followed the original compiler. In its extant form the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* is a late and highly evolved product, but a comparison of its contents with the *Narrative I* material indicates that *Narrative Ib* must have been used at a stage when the *Miharbān* tradition was assuming a coherent form. Whereas distinctively *Ia* sakhis are conspicuously absent from the *Miharbān* version, all the nucleus material and one of the unmistakably *Ib* anecdotes (the Karoṛī sākhī) have been included. This suggests that at some early stage in the evolution of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* use was made of a *Narrative Ib* recension, prior to the entry of the *Ib* Bābur discourse or the *Ib* development of the Śivanābh story. Although the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* does include references to Śivanābh they indicate a much earlier source than the evolved *Narrative Ib* version.[4]

The *Miharbān* references to Śivanābh provide a rare instance of an early form preserved within the highly developed *Miharbān* tradition. A characteristic feature of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* is its considerable expansion of earlier tradition. This applies to most of the material which it derived from its early *Narrative Ib* source. Even the Śivanābh references

---

[1] *B40*, sākhīs 9 and 15–16.   [2] *B40*, sākhī 28.   [3] See below, p. 202.
[4] *Mih JS* II.1, 65–6.
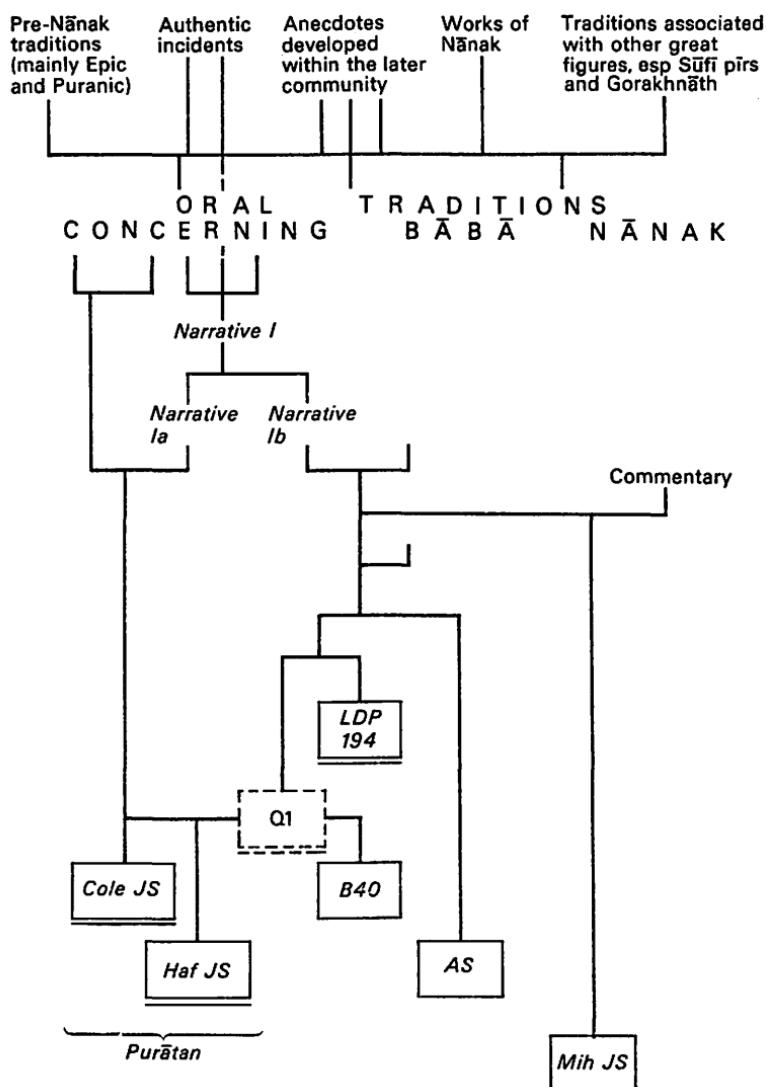
Figure 19

manifest the same feature, the essential difference from other versions being that the *Miharbān* commentators have developed the references in their own distinctive way. The result is that the *Narrative Ib* borrowings have been scattered within the *Miharbān* tradition and each anecdote has been greatly expanded in accordance with the distinctive exegetical concerns of the *Miharbān* school. Although this dispersion and expansion of the individual *Narrative I* anecdotes serves in some measure to obscure the connection, there seems to be no doubt that the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* must be linked to *Narrative I* antecedents through a *Narrative Ib* source.

This pattern may now be illustrated as in figure 19. In this diagram a double line under a janam-sākhī indicates a manuscript wholly or largely derived from the *Narrative I* tradition, as opposed to others only partially based upon *Narrative I* material. It must be stressed that in several respects it represents an oversimplification of the pattern, particularly with regard to the supplementary sources which have been used to develop the *Narrative Ia* tradition. In the analysis which follows only the *B40* collection will be subjected to comprehensive treatment, and of the remaining janam-sākhīs only the *Ādi Sākhīs* will be considered at any length. The same kind of analysis could also be applied to the *Narrative Ia* products, and were this to be done the strands which merge in the *Cole-brooke* and *Hāfizābād* janam-sākhīs would be considerably diversified. Some of them would also have to be linked with strands following different routes to non-*Purātan* janam-sākhīs, the *Bālā* material would have be to introduced, and the only alternatives would be either another extended series of diagrams or a comprehensive diagram of impossible complexity.

One further complication should, however, be noted before the *Narrative I* analysis is terminated. This concerns the multiplication of cross connections which can result from a comparison of the different versions of a single sākhī. Complications of this sort can emerge not only in comparisons of *Ia* and *Ib* versions of anecdotes from the original nucleus but even within the generally consistent *Ib* tradition. Although variant readings are common, most versions of *Narrative Ib* sākhīs are characterized by a general agreement in terms of structure. Whenever this agreement is disrupted by a particular compiler's temporary use of an alternative source a more diverse pattern results.

The clearest and most substantial example of this feature is provided by the incorporation of *Miharbān* material in the *B40* version of the sākhī 'A Discourse with Sheikh Braham'. This borrowing has already been analysed in order to illustrate the manner in which individual sākhīs have expanded.[1] If it is to be represented in the *Narrative I* diagram the pattern must be extended as in figure 20.

This concludes the analysis of *Narrative I*, the collection of anecdotes which was evidently the first to emerge in a coherent form and which,

---

[1] *B40*, sākhī 17, ff. 57b–65a. See above, pp. 131–5. The *B40* compiler later makes more extensive use of *Miharbān* material, presumably drawing it from the same source. See below, pp. 226–8.
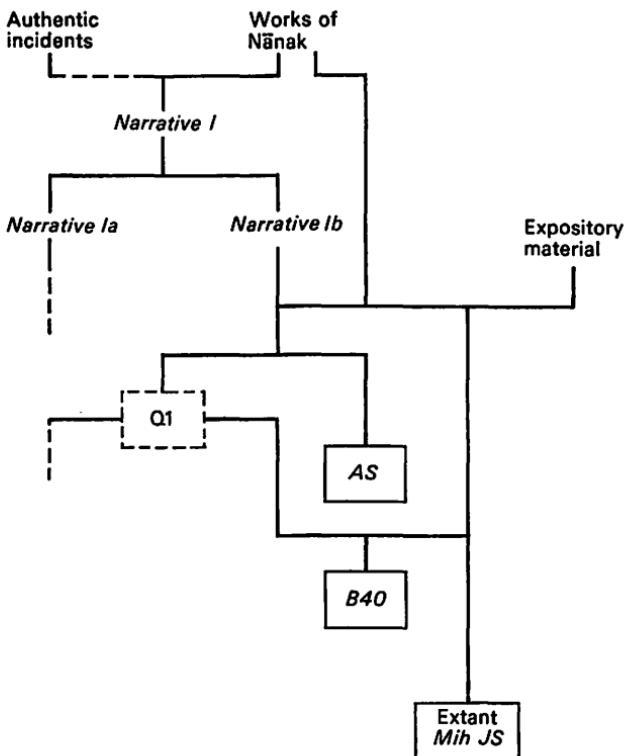
Figure 20

with varying supplements, has served as a basis for some of the most important of the extant janam-sākhīs.

NARRATIVE II

Although the *B40* compiler clearly began his work with a *Narrative Ib* manuscript before him, and although the anecdotes drawn from this tradition constitute the basis of his janam-sākhī, *Narrative Ib* material actually supplies only a small proportion of the complete *B40 Janam-sākhī*. In the case of the *Ādi Sākhīs* there is a higher proportion of *Narrative Ib* sākhīs, but only because the supplementary material is less than in *B40*. Almost half of the *Ādi Sākhīs* consists of *Narrative Ib* anecdotes. In the longer *B40 Janam-sākhī* the proportion is appreciably less.

A comparison of the supplementary sākhīs in the two collections reveals a second narrative source. It has already been observed that the *Narrative Ib* material in *B40* and the *Ādi Sākhīs*, although clearly descended from a common source, nevertheless shows marked divergences in the two

versions. Obviously the two compilers used different recensions for this portion of their respective collections. Elsewhere, however, it becomes clear that they did have access to a common manuscript. Just as the *B40* compiler shared *Q1* with the *Hāfizābād* compiler, so too did he share another manuscript with the person responsible for the *Ādi Sākhīs*. This conclusion follows from a comparison of the *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs* texts of the following sākhīs:

B40 *sākhī no.*	*Ādi Sākhīs* *sākhī no.*	
20.	8b.	Bābā Nānak's Austerities
21.	8c–d.	Bābā Nānak's Visit to the Pilgrimage Centres
22.	9.	The Country Ruled by Women
23.	14.	Bābā Nānak's Discourse with the Siddhs on Mount Sumeru
24a.	22a.	The Meeting with Lahaṇā
24b.	22b.	Aṅgad returns to Matte dī Sarāi
24c.	22c.	Aṅgad moves to Khaḍūr: his clothes ruined
24d.	—	The installation of Gurū Aṅgad
25.	24.	Mūlā the Khatrī
26a.	25a.	Bābā Nānak's daily discipline
26b.	25b.	The loyal fortitude of Aṅgad
27a.	25c.	Bābā Nānak's adoration
27b.	25d–e.	A Discourse with Gorakhnāth: Bābā Nānak seeks solitude
29.	23.	A Discourse with Siddhs at Achal
30.	1.	An Interview with God
31.	13.	Bābā Nānak in the Land of Unbelievers
32.	15.	Mecca: Bābā Nānak's miraculous arrival.

The degree of textual correspondence which can be demonstrated by a comparison of the two versions places the existence of a common manuscript source beyond all doubt. Most of the material constitutes in actual fact a single version, for variants within the main narrative of any of the sākhīs listed above are of little significance. A large majority can be explained by a tendency to assimilate to the compiler's own dialect, as where the *Ādi Sākhī* uses the verb-form *si* in preference to a more common *B40* usage of *āhā*. More significant variants do appear outside the main narrative, but all such differences, whether of text, content, or arrangement are amenable to simple explanations.

This manuscript we shall designate *Q2* and the tradition which it records we shall distinguish with the title *Narrative II*. The latter term, when set in contrast with *Narrative I*, is intended to imply both similarities and differences. There is certainly a strong similarity in terms of style, for both consist almost exclusively of simple anecdotal narratives and of narrative discourses developed out of passages from the works of Nānak. The differences, though not absolute, relate chiefly to age and doctrine Whereas *Narrative I* offers an amalgam of the earliest traditions and later

developments, *Narrative II* appears to lack the former. This should not, however, be understood to mean that *Narrative II* is late. Some of its material, though not a part of the original nucleus, is obviously very early.

In terms of doctrinal emphasis *Narrative II* is distinguished by the ascetic ideal which in *Narrative I* emerges only in an obvious interpolation.[1] A limited number of *Narrative II* anecdotes have found their way into the *Narrative I* tradition, both *Ia* and *Ib*,[2] but the measure of divergence in such instances is vast. This suggests that common anecdotes have been derived from oral tradition rather than from any recorded source, a feature which serves to emphasize the gap separating *Narrative I* and *Narrative II*.

The existence of *Q2* is indicated not only by the degree of textual correspondence linking *B40* and the *Ādi Sākhīs* but also by the differences which distinguish them. The two janam-sākhīs present edited versions of the common text and it seems clear from the nature of the editorial supplements that the later *B40* manuscript cannot have been copied from the earlier *Ādi Sākhīs*. The two compilers introduce sākhī divisions at different points, and it is actually the later *B40* version which follows a more primitive sequence in its arrangement of the common sākhīs. Although a particular manuscript must have been used by both compilers it is the *B40* collection of A.D. 1733 which brings us closer to it, not the *Ādi Sākhīs* of A.D. 1701.

Differences of arrangement are at once apparent from the list of *Narrative II* anecdotes given above. The two clusters recorded by the *B40* compiler (*B40* sākhīs 20–7 and 29–32) have been in some measure dispersed and rearranged by his *Ādi Sākhīs* counterpart. The *Ādi Sākhīs* order clearly derives from its compiler's concern for chronological order. Like the *Colebrooke* collection, but unlike *B40*, the *Ādi Sākhīs* offers a deliberate reordering of earlier sources designed to construct a coherent sequence. A discourse with God which comes relatively late in the *B40 Janam-sākhī* must have seemed out of place to the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler. The sākhī which embodies this discourse relates the original commissioning of Nānak by God and the divine command to venture forth into the world for its salvation. The logical occasion for such a commissioning evidently appeared to be prior to the first appearance of Nānak in this world. This, it seems, was the line of reasoning which explains the placement of the sākhī at the very beginning of the *Ādi Sākhīs*, prior to the birth of Nānak. To a redactor of the *Narrative Ia* material a more suitable context appeared to be an experience of divine illumination in early manhood. In the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs the commissioning accordingly takes place during Nānak's submergence in the Sultānpur stream, and is immediately followed by the commencement of journeys which now assume the nature of missionary tours.

---

[1] *B40*, f. 68a–b. *AS*, pp. 53–4. *Pur JS*, p. 59.

[2] The Country Ruled by Women, the Sumeru discourse, the meeting with Lahaṇā and his appointment to succeed Nānak, the interview with God, the Achal discourse, and the miraculous arrival in Mecca.

The sequence which the *Ādi Sākhīs* develops by reordering its anecdotes is of considerable interest in that it represents the earliest extant example of a consciously coherent itinerary. In the *Ādi Sākhīs* the sequence assumes the form of a single journey lasting twelve years. Later *Ādi Sākhīs* manuscripts add to the geographical details,[1] but do not alter the structure. The *Miharbān* itinerary, which appears to be based in part on the *Ādi Sākhīs* pattern, divides the single journey into two, allowing for a temporary return to Sultānpur which is missing from the *Ādi Sākhīs*.[2] This pattern diversifies still further within the *Narrative Ia* tradition, perhaps by analogy with the *digvijaya* ideal.[3]

This chronological concern is conspicuously absent from the intention of the *B40* compiler, who apparently copied his material in the order he found it in *Q2*. It seems clear that he must have followed his model closely in terms of sequence, the only divergence being an interpolation which he introduced at one point. While copying from *Q2* the *B40* compiler turned briefly to another source in order to record an anecdote concerning Ajittā Randhāvā (sākhī 28). He then returned to *Q2*. In *Q2* the sākhīs which *B40* has recorded in two clusters presumably constituted a single cluster. This must have followed the order which results from a simple removal of the *B40* sākhī 28.

From the editorial supplements which have been added in both *B40* and the *Ādi Sākhīs* it appears that *Q2* must have been even less coherently structured than *B40*. Although *B40* lacks a consistent sequence it does indicate an awareness that one sākhī can often be linked with its predecessor. In the case of the *Narrative Ib* material this was normally unnecessary, for a comparison of the divergent *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs* versions shows that this rudimentary editing had been performed by an earlier compiler. *Q2* did possess a certain measure of unity, but it was the common ascetic ideal which provided this unity rather than any emendation of earlier sources by the *Q2* compiler.

This was evidently as unsatisfactory to the *B40* compiler as to the person responsible for the *Ādi Sākhīs*. Both have added sentences and paragraphs with the obvious intention of improving the continuity of *Q2*'s disjointed narrative. The *B40* supplements are generally attached to the customary announcement that 'the sākhī is finished.' but occasionally an editorial clarification is worked into the actual narrative. The most prominent of the editorial additions occur, quite naturally, at the beginning or the conclusion of sākhīs. For example, *B40* concludes the Sumeru discourse by slightly extending a brief reference to the coming selection of a successor as Gurū.[4] The *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler has, however, decided to send Nānak to Mecca at this point. Accordingly he adds to the next sākhī a brief introduction which will serve to connect the Sumeru dis-

---

[1] An example is the addition of a reference to Setu-bandha Rāmeśvaram which is missing from one of the *Ādi Sākhīs* manuscripts. *AS*, p. 28.

[2] *GNSR*, p. 66.

[3] *GNSR*, p. 32n.

[4] *B40*, f. 93a.

course with the Mecca visit.[1] The variant conclusions with which the Achal discourse ends probably illustrate the same feature,[2] although in this instance it is possible that *B40* may have preserved a *Q2* reading which the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler had dropped.

The same editorial concern has also produced two brief summaries of Bābā Nānak's travels. In the *Ādi Sākhīs* this summary is attached to the *Q2* Mecca sākhī and serves as a transitional passage leading back into *Narrative Ib* material.

And so all who were there prostrated themselves and became disciples (*sevak*)· Having seen the entire territory of Mecca and Medīnā, and all the countries of that area, following the twelfth year [of his travels] Bābājī returned to Talvaṇḍī. Twelve years from the time when he had given away his property and left Sultānpur he returned to Talvaṇḍī. For two years he worked for Daulat Khān in Sultānpur. For twelve years he travelled. Then he returned home.[3]

The much briefer *B40* summary is attached to its concluding sākhī.[4]

Other additions to either *B40* or the *Ādi Sākhīs* can be explained by a variety of reasons. At one point the *B40* compiler has evidently been unable to resist interpolating a feature which he presumably derived from oral tradition. This seems to be the most likely explanation for the *B40* account of how Bābā Nānak eluded the Siddhs at Achal by means of a miraculous dissolution in the four elements.[5] It seems inconceivable that an episode of this kind would have been omitted by the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler had it been present in *Q2*.

In other instances an addition can presumably be explained by reference to the doctrinal predilections of the compiler. An example appears to be a variant which occurs at the conclusion of the *B40* sākhī relating Bābā Nānak's visit to the pilgrimage centres, and at the beginning of the following sākhī in the *Ādi Sākhīs* version. The *B40* version, which probably adheres to the source at this point, declares that Bābā Nānak 'neither saw nor met a perfected gurū'.[6] The suggestion that Bābā Nānak, himself the divinely appointed messenger, should be in quest of a gurū was evidently more than the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler could accept. This seems to be the explanation for his variant reading, which, by omitting several words, succeeds in making the 'perfected gurū' reference apply to Bābā Nānak.[7] At another point he indicates an interest in the meat-eating controversy by inserting a direct reference to flesh (*sagauti*) when specifying the diet which Bābā Nānak permitted his Sikhs to observe.[8]

One further reason for expanding *Q2* was the ever-present impulse to add quotations from the works attributed to Nānak at convenient (and sometimes inconvenient) points in the received narrative. This is obviously

---

[1] *AS*, p. 42. The *Ādi Sākhīs* version of the Sumeru discourse also provides an example of editorial clarification inserted during the course of the main narrative. To the extract *Vār Rāmkalī 12:2* there is added the note: 'Īśar Nāth said this.' *AS*, p. 39.

[2] *B40*, f. 122b. *AS*, p. 76.   [3] *AS*, p. 44.   [4] *B40*, f. 221a.

[5] See above, p. 152. The anecdote still figures prominently in the oral tradition of the Baṭālā area.

[6] *B40*, f. 82a.   [7] *AS*, p. 26.

[8] *AS*, p. 80. Cf. *B40*, f. 103b. The earlier portion of the *Ādi Sākhīs* version of this anecdote contains several sentences which are lacking in *B40*.

the source of the apocryphal *Tilaṅg Aṣṭapadī* 1 quotation at the conclusion of the *B40* sākhī 21.[1] The hymn is in no sense an integral part of the sākhī which purports to provide a context and it is absent from the *Ādi Sākhīs* version. Its introduction can be explained by its theme, which, in a limited sense, bears some resemblance to the theme of the sākhī's concluding anecdote.

All such variants do not, of course, prove an interpolation. In some instances a difference distinguishing the two versions arises from the obvious omission by one of the compilers of material which was evidently recorded in *Q2*. In the more significant instances (those which involve complete anecdotes) this feature can be explained by a compiler's preference for an alternative version to which he apparently had access. It seems likely that this must have been the reason for the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler's omission of the account of Gurū Aṅgad's installation.[2] Elsewhere he introduces a different version, obviously a later, more evolved anecdote and for that reason a more attractive choice.[3] The *Narrative II* version was deliberately omitted and at the chronologically logical point (the period leading to Bābā Nānak's death) the alternative version was introduced.

The *B40* compiler also seems to have omitted anecdotes which were recorded in *Q2*, but for a slightly different reason. In the *Ādi Sākhīs*, between two clusters which are certainly from *Q2*, there occurs the following cluster:

10. The Monster's Cauldron
11. The Encounter with Kaliyug
12. Sajjaṇ the Robber.[4]

There is good reason for regarding these sākhīs as further borrowings from *Q2*. They accord with the other *Q2* clusters in terms of language and style, and they appear in the midst of *Q2* material where no evident reason for changing source exists. Moreover, they have analogues in the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*. The significance of this parallel lies partly in the distinctive pattern followed by the *Ādi Sākhīs* versions, and partly in the material which the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* associates with them.

The three anecdotes, as they appear in the *Ādi Sākhīs* version, are distinctively different from the better-known versions of the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs. The Monster's Cauldron sākhī omits Gurū Arjan's *Mārū* 14, which, because it contains a reference to a cauldron, has subsequently been attached to the anecdote; the encounter with Kaliyug is heralded by the approach of a hill which later turns out to be a man; and the Sajjaṇ of the *Ādi Sākhīs* is a different person from Sheikh Sajjaṇ of the *Purātan* tradition. All of these features appear in the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*. As one would expect they have been amended and expanded, but they are plainly derived either from a source shared with the *Ādi Sākhīs*, or perhaps from a manuscript copy of the *Ādi Sākhīs* collection itself.

[1] *B40*, ff. 81a–82a.
[2] *B40*, sākhī 24d, ff. 98b–99a. The shabad *Sirī Rāg* 25 which *B40* appends may be an addition by ts compiler to his *Q2* source.
[3] *AS*, pp. 90–8. [4] *AS*, pp. 28–33.

In the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* these sākhīs constitute three of the anecdotes in a cluster of five.[1] The second in this group, a typical *Miharbān* discourse, is an expansion of a question concerning the existence of God which occurs in the fourth sākhī of the cluster. This fourth sākhī is the anecdote 'Bābā Nānak in the Land of Unbelievers'. It is a *Q2* sākhī, and there are several other examples of late *Miharbān* borrowings from the *Narrative II* tradition. The conclusion which this indicates is that the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler must have taken the three sākhīs from *Q2*. The *B40* compiler's temporary abandonment of *Q2* can be explained by the fact that he had already recorded other versions of these same sākhīs.[2]

Although *Q2* must have been an early manuscript, it could not have represented a collection of anecdotes drawn from a single source. For the *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs* compilers it constituted an important single source, but behind it lay several different sources. The *Narrative II* tradition was, in fact, a composite tradition. This diversity is evident from the varying content of the *Q2* material, and at least two of its sources can be positively identified. The major distinction can be observed in a comparison of the *B40* sākhīs 21 and 22. Sākhīs 20 and 21, the first of the *Narrative II* cluster, represent the ascetic ideal to which reference was made earlier in this section when distinguishing *Narrative II*. Here the emphasis is upon renunciation, upon separation from the world in order to obtain salvation, upon a philosophy which testifies to the reassertion of traditional ideals within the Sikh panth. When in *B40* sākhī 21 Bābā Nānak makes his first converts these 'first disciples' are said to have become renunciant *bairāgīs*,[3] and to this the *B40* compiler adds the apocryphal *Tilaṅg* hymn in praise of renunciation.[4]

This was not a philosophy which commended itself to all within the community, but obviously it did retain a hold on some and their convictions emerge in these sākhīs. Other *Q2* borrowings which manifest the same concern are *B40* sākhīs 25, 26a, 26b, 27a, 27b, and, in a strictly qualified sense, 31. In the janam-sākhīs this element emerges later than the simple wonder-narrative and we shall accordingly designate it *Narrative IIb*. The origins of this tradition should probably be traced to the Udāsī panth, the sect within the Sikh community which was avowedly dedicated to the maintenance of ascetic belief and practice. The connection is indicated not only by the ascetic tone of the *Narrative IIb* material but also by a reference in the *B40* sākhī 31 which describes how Bābā Nānak, having arrived in the Land of Unbelievers, installed a *dhūān* (hearth).[5] The practice of constructing simple hearths was a Nāth custom which had been appropriated by the Udāsī sādhūs and subsequently the word *dhūān* was extended to designate any Udāsī establishment.[6]

[1] *Mih JS* I.226–38.
[2] See above, pp. 192–4. [3] *B40*, f. 81a. *AS*, p. 26. *Mih JS* I.120.
[4] See above, p. 76. [5] *B40*, f. 128b. *AS*, p. 34. *Mih JS* I.232.
[6] For a description of the Nāth *dhūnī* see G. W. Briggs, *Gorakhnāth and the Kānphaṭa Yogīs* (Calcutta, 1938), p. 21. The words *dhūān* and *dhūnī* both mean, in their literal sense, 'smoke', but were used by the Nāths and Udāsīs to designate the ritual hearths which produced the smoke.

A change in tone within the *Q2* material becomes evident as we move from the *Narrative IIb* sākhī 21 into sākhī 22. Once again we are back in the realm of the wonder-narrative, the anecdote which expresses the basic janam-sākhī myth in its simplest terms. Bābā Nānak is the divinely commissioned giver of salvation. All who oppose him are humbled and converted. Even the most crafty of dark magic will fail to overcome him, for his strength lies in the infinite power of the divine Name. Needless to say, this theme is by no means absent from the *Narrative IIb* sākhīs. The primary distinction lies in the ascetic ideal which the *Narrative IIb* sākhīs attach to the common theme. The simpler sākhīs which lack this ideal we shall designate *Narrative IIa*. To this group belong the balance of the *B40* borrowings from *Q2*: sākhīs 22, 23, 24a–d, 29, 30, and 32. The three sākhīs recorded in their *Narrative II* form only by the *Ādi Sākhīs* (nos. 10, 11, and 12) also derive from this source.

Narrative IIa sākhīs are also distinguished from *Narrative IIb* material by an obvious link with the *Narrative I* tradition, probably in its *Ia* development. All of the sākhīs which omit the characteristic ascetic emphasis of the *Narrative IIb* anecdotes have analogues in the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*. In each case the *Narrative IIa* version (i.e. the version recorded in *Q2*) is obviously nearer to the common source than the *Narrative Ia* analogue as recorded in the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*. This is best illustrated by a comparison of the two variant treatments of the Mecca sākhī. In its *Narrative IIa* version this anecdote possesses a simplicity of form which must derive directly, or almost directly, from the earliest oral tradition. The *Narrative Ia* version, in contrast, has evolved its much more complicated narrative by conflating this anecdote with the story of the moving *miharāb* and with the separate Rukn al-Dīn discourse.[1]

This indicates a distinct but somewhat remote link with the *Narrative I* tradition. It appears that there may also be a link at this point with Bhāi Gurdās's *Vār* 1. Bhāi Gurdās's brief account of the life of Nānak is essentially an independent selection, including amongst its six anecdotes two which do not find a place in any of the major janam-sākhīs.[2] Of the remainder three do have analogues in both the *Narrative Ia* and *Narrative IIa* traditions,[3] and it is this feature which suggests a link with *Q2*, *B40*, and the *Ādi Sākhīs*.

An even closer connection may be observed in the case of the tradition which we shall be designating *Narrative III*.[4] This link is evident at two points. *Narrative III* is, of all traditions, the easiest to recognize, for it follows a distinctive structural pattern and includes several characteristic formulae. Some of these formulae appear in a brief prologue which is attached to sākhī 25 of the *B40 Janam-sākhī*.[5] The prologue does not

---

[1] See above, pp. 137–9.

[2] A version of Bābā Nānak's visit to Bāghdād, and the story of his encounter with the pīrs of Multān. *BG* 1:35–6, 44.

[3] The Mount Sumeru discourse, the Achal discourse, and the installation of Gurū Aṅgad. *BG* 1:28–31, 39–44, 45.

[4] See below, pp. 220–6.

[5] 'Mūlā the Khatrī.' *B40*, ff. 100a–100b (line 3). *AS*, pp. 76–7.

relate in any obvious way to the sākhī which follows it and there can be little doubt that it has been taken from the *Narrative III* tradition, probably by the *Q2* compiler himself.

The second appearance of *Narrative III* material occurs in *B40* sākhī 31, 'Bābā Nānak in the Land of Unbelievers' (*munāfik deś*).[1] This is another composite sākhī consisting, like *B40* sākhī 25, of a single anecdote prefaced by a brief eulogy of Bābā Nānak.[2] In this instance (unlike *B40* sākhī 25) it is the anecdote which derives from a *Narrative III* source. Whereas its prologue lacks the characteristic *Narrative III* formulae, the anecdote itself possesses both the typical *Narrative III* structure and its formulae. In its *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs* form this sākhī accords reasonably well with the ascetic ideals of *Narrative IIb*, and this may explain its inclusion within the *Narrative II* tradition as recorded by *Q2*. Alternatively an earlier *Narrative III* anecdote may have been augmented with elements which conformed to the *Narrative IIb* ideal.

Another recognizable source which appears within the *Narrative II* material of *Q2* is the *Miharbān* tradition. This emerges in the form of another interpolation, this time within a *Narrative IIa* sākhī. The *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs* versions of the Achal discourse both incorporate an exegetical passage wholly out of character for any of the *Narrative* sources.[3] The passage is however in complete conformity with the *Miharbān* style and there can be no doubt that an early recension of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* has provided its source. This particular feature has already been discussed in the section dealing with the evolution of individual sākhīs.[4] Once again the analogue in the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* testifies to the lateness of this extant version.[5]

The *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs* debt to the *Q2* manuscript (their *Narrative II* source) may be summarized as in the table on page 206.

The relationships linking *B40* and the *Ādi Sākhīs* to each other and to their common sources now form the pattern shown in figure 21. The twofold link with the *Miharbān* tradition represents first the interpolation from a *Miharbān* source in the Achal sākhī of *Narrative IIa*; and secondly the later appearance of *Narrative II* material in the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*.[6] *Narrative II* sākhīs which appear in the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* comprise all the *Narrative IIb* sākhīs, including the *Narrative III* borrowing;[7] the three *Narrative IIa* sākhīs which do not appear in the *B40* manuscript (*Ādi Sākhīs* numbers 10–12);[8] and the *Narrative IIa* cluster concerning Gurū Aṅgad which both *B40* and the *Ādi Sākhīs* record as a

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 127b–132a. *AS*, pp. 33–6.

[2] The preface occupies folio 127b of the *B40* manuscript and probably extends to line 12 of folio 128a. The portion which appears on folio 128a may, however, be the remnant of another anecdote. The *Ādi Sākhīs* and the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* also record the sākhī in its composite form, including in it both the preface and the actual anecdote.

[3] *B40*, ff. 118a (line 3) to 120b (line 6). *AS*, pp. 73–5.

[4] See above, pp. 152–3.   [5] *Mih JS* II.69–74.   [6] See above, pp. 202–3.

[7] *Mih JS* I.111, 117–28. *Mih JS* II.143–7, 152–6, 163–4. *Narrative III* borrowing: *Mih JS* I.231–4.

[8] *Mih JS* I.226–31, 235–8.

B40	Ādi Sākhis	Colebrooke		
22	9	23	The Country Ruled by Women	
23	14	50a.	Discourse on Mount Sumeru	
24a–d.	22a–c.	53–4.	Anecdotes concerning Aṅgad	
29.	23.	50b	Discourse at Achal with *Miharbān* interpolation	Narrative IIa
30.	1.	10.	Interview with God	
32.	15.	51.	Mecca: Bābā Nānak's miraculous arrival	
—	10.	44.	The Monster's Cauldron	
—	11.	24.	The Encounter with Kaliyug	
—	12.	13.	Sajjaṇ the Robber	
20.	8b.	—	Bābā Nānak's Austerities	
21.	8c–d.	—	Visit to the Pilgrimage Centres	
25.	24.	—	Prologue from *Narrative III* / Mūlā the Khatrī	
26a.	25a.	—	Bābā Nānak's Daily Discipline	Narrative IIb
26b.	25b.	—	The Loyal Fortitude of Aṅgad	
27a.	25c.	—	Bābā Nānak's Adoration	
27b.	25d–e.	—	Discourse with Gorakhnāth: Bābā Nānak seeks solitude	
31.	13.	—	Bābā Nānak in the Land of Unbelievers	Narrative III

Q2

ORAL   TRADITIONS
CONCERNING   BĀBĀ   NĀNAK
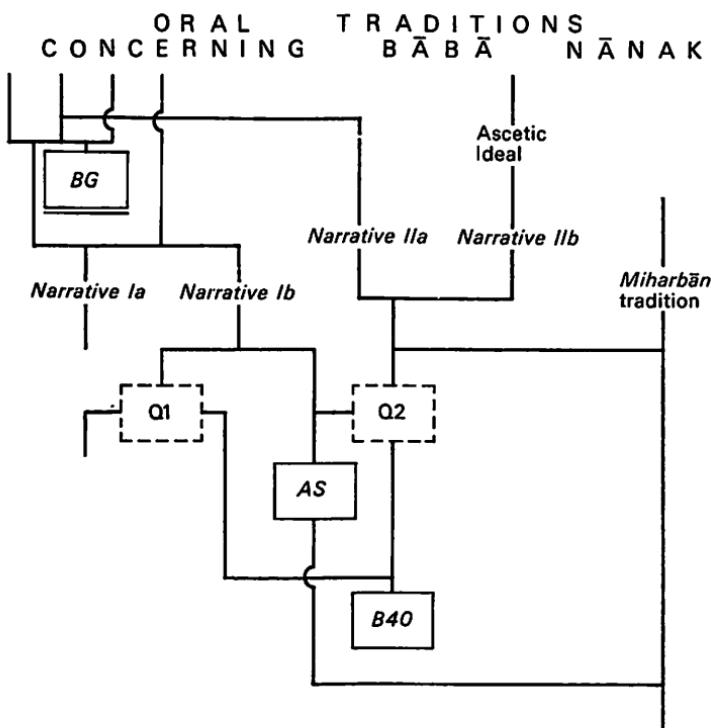
Figure 21

single sākhī (*B40* number 24, *Ādi Sākhīs* number 22).[1] Four features of the *Miharbān* versions of these sakhis indicate that the borrowing must have been from the *Ādi Sākhīs* to *Miharbān* rather than vice versa; and that it must have been from an *Ādi Sākhīs* manuscript rather than from an early *Narrative II* source.

First, it is immediately evident that the *Miharbān* analogues are conspicuously out of character for the *Miharbān* tradition. The typical *Miharbān* sākhī, or *goṣṭ*, consists of a brief narrative introduction followed by quotations from the works of Nānak and copious quantities of exegesis. Sustained narrative of the kind followed in these *Narrative II* sākhīs is alien to the *Miharbān* tradition and indicates a later borrowing.

Secondly, there is commonly an agreement in terms of sequence between *Miharbān* and the *Ādi Sākhīs*. A comparison of the *Ādi Sākhīs* and *B40* texts has already indicated that the *Ādi Sākhīs* sequence is a

---

[1] *Mih JS* II.66–8. Although most of the other *Narrative IIa* anecdotes also have analogues in the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* all diverge widely from the *B40/Ādi Sākhīs* text. The *Miharbān* versions have clearly been taken from sources other than the *Narrative II* tradition.

pattern imposed upon the *Q2* anecdotes by the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler himself. If this conclusion is correct the *Miharbān* agreement can only mean that *Miharbān* is following the *Ādi Sākhīs*.

Thirdly, there is a harmony within the *Miharbān* clusters which the *Ādi Sākhīs* text lacks. This becomes even clearer when to the *Narrative II* borrowings are added others which the *Ādi Sākhīs* apparently derived from different sources. In the *Ādi Sākhīs* the breaks which mark changes of source are apparent; whereas in the *Miharbān* version these have been largely obliterated.

Fourthly, there is the presence of the Aṅgad cluster within the borrowed material. Had the analogues been confined to *Narrative IIb* material and the *Narrative IIa* sākhīs which are absent from *B40* it would have been difficult to resist the conclusion that the *Miharbān* borrowing must have been from a source which predated the union of *IIa* and *IIb* in *Q2*. The inclusion of the Aṅgad cluster greatly weakens this possibility, supporting instead the theory of a *Miharbān* borrowing from the *Ādi Sākhīs*. More *IIa* material can also be discerned in the *Miharbān* prologue to the Sumeru discourse.[1] There is a general correspondence between the *Miharbān* version on the one hand and the *B40/Ādi Sākhīs* text on the other, and distinctive expressions are common to both.[2]

The conclusion indicated by this analysis is that a late *Miharbān* redactor borrowed these and (as we shall see) a number of other sākhīs from an *Ādi Sākhīs* manuscript. The borrowing must have been a relatively recent one, for had the sākhīs been contained within the *Miharbān* tradition for any appreciable period they would inevitably have assimilated to the *Miharbān* pattern of quotation and exegesis. The omission of the remaining *Narrative IIa* sākhīs can perhaps be explained in all cases but one by the presence of an analogue in earlier *Miharbān* recensions. The one exception, the 'Country ruled by Women' sākhī, may possibly reflect the general *Miharbān* reluctance to record the more fantastic variety of wonder-story.[3]

The Aṅgad cluster which appears in this segment of borrowed material has already been discussed separately as an example of how anecdotes relating to a particular person, place, or event tend to form a distinct pattern and to be transmitted in the same regular sequence. The diagram illustrating this process which appears on page 170 can now be reproduced with the various sources indicated.

The reason for including a second recension of the *Ādi Sākhīs* will be made clear in the next section.

---

[1] *Mih JS* I.384–5.

[2] For example, Bābā Nānak's claim that he had come from *āsā-andesā*, literally 'hope-anxiety'. *B40*, f. 86b. *AS*, p. 37. *Mih JS* I.385. Both texts also contain the word *viāh*. The *Miharbān* version clearly intends it to mean 'marriage', whereas the *B40/Ādi Sākhīs* text seems to be referring to the Beās river. See *B40(Eng)*, p. 92n.

[3] *GNSR*, p. 31. The fact that the *Miharbān* tradition already included a Kaliyug sākhī did not prevent the late redactor from borrowing the *Ādi Sākhīs* version, for it differed sufficiently to seem a different anecdote. The resemblance was nevertheless close enough to suggest a point at which one of the borrowed clusters could be interpolated. *Mih JS* I.226.
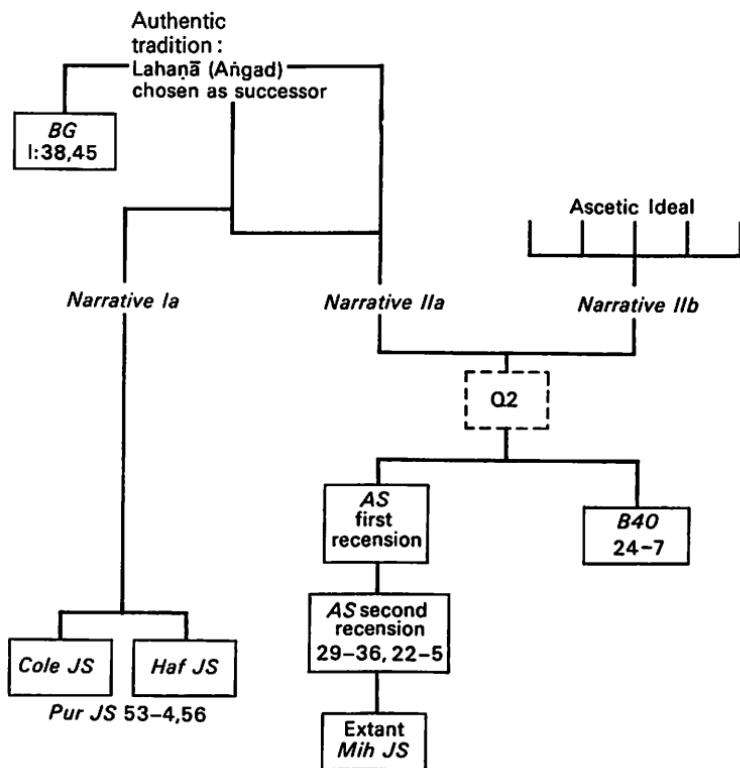
Figure 22

One final conclusion which may be drawn from this pattern is that *Q2* must certainly have been found within the same geographical area as *Q1*, *B40*, and the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*.[1] This is indicated not only by the fact that the *B40* compiler had access to it, but also by the *Narrative III* borrowings which appear in *Q2*. *Narrative III* appears to have been the oral tradition current in the *B40* compiler's locality.[2] The fact that the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler could also copy from *Q2* suggests that he too may have lived within this same area. This possibility must, however, be attended by some doubt. The connection of the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī* with the *Colebrooke* manuscript as well as with *Q1* indicates that a compiler could draw on sources which must have been widely separated in terms of geographical distance. If in fact *Q1* was located in the *B40* area, and if the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler lived within easy reach of the same locality, it seems likely that he would have known of its existence and would have utilized it. On the other hand access to *Q1* may, for some

---

[1] See above, p. 191.   [2] See below, p. 223.

reason, have been denied to him, or he may have had even easier access to a *Narrative Ib* manuscript other than *Q1*. We may therefore suggest as likely conclusions that *Q2* and *B40* were both compiled in the area of Gujranwālā District; that *Q1* and the *Hāfizābād* manuscript were either compiled there or at least held by owners who lived in that same area; and that the conclusion applied to *Q1* and the *Hāfizābād* manuscript may perhaps also apply to the *Ādi Sākhīs*.

OTHER SOURCES OF THE ĀDI SĀKHĪS

Narrative Ib and *Narrative IIa–b* together provide almost all the sākhīs recorded in the *Ādi Sākhīs*. To complete the analysis of sources used for this janam-sākhī there remain only the five concluding sākhīs:

26. A recitation of *Japjī*
27. Dead birds revivified: Bābā Nānak's remorse
28a. An interview with God: recitation of the shabad *Sodar*
28b. Bābā Nānak summons the Gangā to thirsty Sikhs
29a. Bābā Nānak tests his Sikhs (continued)
29b. The story of Vasiṣṭ
29c. Bābā Nānak tests his Sikhs (continued):
    Aṅgad commanded to eat the corpse
30a. The installation of Gurū Aṅgad
30b. The death of Bābā Nānak.

These remaining sākhīs raise considerable difficulties concerning source and transmission, difficulties which emerge with particular sharpness when the five sākhīs are compared with analogues in the *Miharbān* tradition.

Sākhī 26 begins with the statement: 'When this discourse was completed Gorakhnāth said to Bābā [Nānak] . . .'[1] As the latter portion of the preceding sākhī is not in fact a discourse the sentence suggests that the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler had at this point turned to a different source. This possibility is supported by the *B40* switch to a different source at the same point,[2] and the reference to Gorakhnāth (who had also appeared in sākhī 25) suggests a reason for the *Ādi Sākhīs* introduction of sākhī 26 at this particular juncture. These features indicate a break at the end of sākhī 25, without conclusively proving it. The fact that the brief narrative portion of sākhī 26 continues the Pañjābī of its predecessor means that some measure of doubt must persist, but it is scarcely a compelling doubt. The linguistic continuity could be the result of assimilation either to the language of the preceding *Q2* material or to the compiler's own usage. In view of the fact that this narrative portion comprises only two sentences such a process would be quite possible.

The question of language is, however, of subsequent importance, for the three anecdotes which immediately follow sākhī 26 are expressed in a Kharī Bolī (or a Sādhukkarī closely related to Kharī Bolī) which at once distinguishes them sharply from the *Narrative II* material of *Q2*. Whatever the origin of sākhī 26 there can be no doubt that for the next two sākhīs

[1] *AS*, pp. 84 5.   [2] *B40*, f. 111a.

the compiler is utilizing a source or sources other than $Q2$. In addition to the language difference three further features mark this distinction. First, there is the style, which, in sākhī 27, assumes the form of a soliloquy. This is not a feature to be associated with $Q2$. Secondly, a comparison of the *Ādi Sākhīs*' sākhī 28a with its sākhī 1 (sākhī 30 in $B40$) reveals that the two are analogues. Sākhī 1 comes from $Q2$, which suggests that sākhī 28a is unlikely to have derived from that particular source. Thirdly, there is the failure of $B40$ to record this material. The conclusion which follows is that the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler has almost certainly drawn sākhīs 27 and 28 (both 28a and 28b) from a source to which the $B40$ compiler did not have access; and that sākhī 26 may have come from this same source.

A further conclusion which emerges from a study of these three sākhīs is that in all likelihood they entered the *Ādi Sākhīs* tradition as an addition made by a later copyist rather than as a part of the first recension. This conclusion is indicated by the failure of one of the extant *Ādi Sākhīs* manuscripts to include them.[1] The association of sākhī 26 with sākhīs 27 and 28, rather than with sākhī 25, derives further support from this omission.

The beginning of sākhī 29 marks a reversion not only to Pañjābī but also to the story of how Bābā Nānak tested his Sikhs. This was the theme of sākhī 25 and its reappearance at this point suggests a continuation of the same source following the irruption of sākhīs 26–8 in the later recensions of the *Ādi Sākhīs*. The story continues with an account of how Bābā Nānak tested Aṅgad by banishing him from his sight, but before reaching a conclusion it suffers another interruption. This consists of a lengthy anecdote concerning Ṛṣi Vasiṣṭ, Rām Chandar, and Lachhman (sākhī 29b).[2]

In a sense this anecdote, though distinctly alien to the janam-sākhī *Narrative* traditions, is not an interruption. It purports to be a speech of reassurance uttered by Aṅgad in order to comfort the Sikhs who had been puzzled and frightened by Nānak's sudden resort to threats of violence.[3] As such it seems to accord with the theme of the sākhī within which it occurs. It is, however, plainly an addition to earlier traditions concerning the tests which Bābā Nānak imposed on his followers in order to determine the measure of their loyalty to him. Moreover, it is at once clear that the source of the digression is the ever-popular cycle of *Rāmāyaṇa* legends. The issue which is not clear is whether the interpolation was limited to sākhī 29b, or whether it also included the setting provided by sākhī 29a and the beginning of sākhī 29c. In the *Ādi Sākhīs* version all three sections of sākhī 29 have been fused into a single coherent narrative with a link passage leading into the final anecdote of the series.[4] This suggests that the interpolation was not the compiler's own work, but that of his source.

The concluding anecdote of the series is the celebrated story of how Bābā Nānak tested Aṅgad's loyalty by commanding him to eat a corpse.[5]

[1] The manuscript in the possession of Shamsher Singh Ashok. *AS*, p. *xi*.
[2] *AS*, pp. 91–4.   [3] *B40*, f. 109b.   [4] *AS*, pp. 94–5.
[5] *AS*, pp. 95–7. *GNSR*, p. 50.

This reaches a climax with an ascription of praise to Bābā Nānak, the Giver of Salvation,[1] and leads naturally into sākhī 30a. The first part of this final sākhī narrates an account of the installation of Aṅgad as Gurū and introduces a brief reference to the objections raised by Nānak's own sons. At this point another obvious break occurs and it is evident that the compiler has once again changed his source.

The reason for the change evidently relates to the anecdote concerning Nānak's sons, for the new material takes up the account of their objections. The break is, however, patently obvious. The two sons who in the previous section are already arguing with their father are represented in the new material as absent from him, and for the first time hearing the news of his approaching death. They at once hasten to his bedside and begin lodging the objections already set forth in the earlier narrative. The two sentences which begin the new material do not in fact refer to the sons but to funeral preparations. This points back to a preceding narrative in the new source, a narrative which has been omitted by the Ādi Sākhīs compiler because the reference to the two sons seemed to provide a more appropriate point at which to introduce his new source material. The nature of the preceding narrative can be determined from the B40 analogue,[2] for it is at this point that the Ādi Sākhīs and B40 draw near to each other again. They do not, however, coincide. Somewhere behind the two versions there lies a common source for this 'Death of Nanak' sākhī. The two compilers have used widely divergent versions of this common material, and each has joined to it anecdotes drawn from mutually different sources.

Sākhī 30b concludes the Ādi Sākhīs narrative. Nānak's date of death is given as Asū sudi 10, S.1595,[3] and the janam-sākhī terminates with the customary offering of praise to the Gurū. An effort must now be made to identify the sources which have contributed to these five concluding sākhīs. Unfortunately the pattern which they present is unusually complicated and most conclusions concerning their origins must be regarded as strictly tentative.

The five sākhīs begin with a break, and two further breaks have been noted within the group. The initial break seems to mark the abandonment of Q2 in favour of a Kharī Bolī source; the second marks a reversion to a Pañjābī narrative which appears to connect with sākhī 25; and the final break, while continuing the Pañjābī narrative, makes its presence clear by means of a clumsy repetition. This leaves us with three clearly defined sections. Within the second of these a lengthy sub-section (the Rāmāyaṇa borrowing) can be discerned. This indicates the pattern shown in figure 23. These four elements must be identified before the analysis of the Ādi Sākhīs sources is complete.

A possible source of the first cluster (26–8b) is the Miharbān tradition.

---

[1] AS, p. 97.   [2] B40, ff. 221a–227a.

[3] The appearance in some manuscripts of vadī (the dark half of the lunar month, or period of the waning moon) in place of sudī (the light half) is clearly a later amendment intended to bring the Ādi Sākhīs date closer to the generally accepted date. AS, pp. xxxi–ii, 100 n. 3. GNSR, pp. 100–1.

This identification is suggested by the sentence, quoted above,[1] with which sākhī 26 begins. Whereas the reference in this sentence to a discourse (*goṣṭ*) does not connect logically with the conclusion of sākhī 25, it could conceivably indicate a connection with the *Ādi Sākhīs* conclusion of sākhī 23 (the Achal discourse). At the end of this sākhī both the *Ādi*

Ādi Sākhīs
sākhīs 26-30
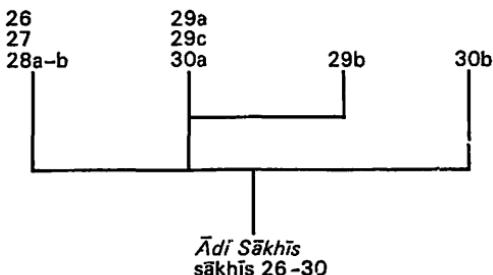
Figure 23

Sākhīs and *B40* state that Bābā Nānak, on this occasion, recited his *Siddh Goṣṭ*.[2] To this the *Ādi Sākhīs* adds a sentence which does not appear in the *B40* text: *tis kā nāle arath nāle paramārath*. 'With it (the text of the *Siddh Goṣṭ*) is the meaning and exegesis.'[3] This formula plainly indicates the *Miharbān* tradition and suggests that the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler had before him a *Miharbān* source which at that point he was relinquishing. This source he may have been using earlier in the Achal sākhī, for his version of the *Miharbān* interpolation differs appreciably from the shorter *B40* version.[4] The nature of the difference consorts well with the possibility of a compiler having recognized a *Miharbān* borrowing within *Q2* and having thus been prompted to turn briefly to a *Miharbān* source which was in his possession.

It is possible that the introduction to sākhī 26 marks a return to this source. The reference to a *goṣṭ* seems to indicate this; the Khaṛī Bolī language of the cluster supports it; and the shift from narrative to soliloquy in sākhī 27 evidently adds to this support. Finally, there exist within the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* analogues for all the sākhīs in the cluster.[5] The first sākhī of the cluster (the *Japjī* recitation) is set by the *Miharbān* version in the context of the Achal discourse, where it follows the *Siddh Goṣṭ* text and commentary. It includes more stanzas than the *Ādi Sākhīs* version, but agrees with it in beginning the recitation at the twenty-eighth stanza.

The existence of analogues, though seemingly the strongest argument of all, must be examined before it can be adduced in support of the

---

[1] See above, p. 210.   [2] *B40*, f. 122a.   [3] *AS*, p. 76.
[4] See above, p. 205, n. 3.
[5] *AS* sākhī 26 (*Mih JS* II.125–37). *AS* sākhī 27 (*Mih JS* I.269–71). *AS* sākhī 28a (*Mih JS* II.138–41). *AS* sākhī 28b (*Mih JS* II.137–8).

Miharbān identification. It has already been argued that the *Miharbān* tradition was itself indebted to the *Ādi Sākhīs* and it is possible that these analogues should be classified in the same manner. The case for an original *Miharbān* borrowing from the *Ādi Sākhīs* is, however, weaker in this instance. A much stronger case can be made when a *Miharbān* analogue follows a narrative pattern which can be recognized as untypical of the distinctive exegetical style of the *Miharbān* tradition. The passages in the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* which appear to derive from *Narrative II* sources via the *Ādi Sākhīs* are all of this uncharacteristic narrative variety. In contrast the sākhīs now under examination are, with one exception, cast in the *Miharbān* mould.[1]

There are, it is true, objections to this identification of a *Miharbān* source for sākhīs 26–8, notably, the fact that the *Ādi Sākhīs* versions lack the exegetical passages which constitute the most prominent feature of the *Miharbān* style. This may perhaps be explained by the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler's evident preference for narrative, a preference which may have prompted him to paraphrase his *Miharbān* source. It will be noted, however, that conjectures are accumulating with distressing speed. Our conclusion is that the *Miharbān* tradition provides the most likely source for the cluster, but that the identification can be no more than tentative.

The second cluster, sākhīs 29a–30a, connects with the narrative of sākhī 25 and suggests that the *Ādi Sākhīs* may at this point have reverted to *Q2*. Although this possibility receives further support from a general identity of language and idiom it cannot be accepted without question. A number of features point to a different source.

The first of these features is the structure and content of the sākhīs which constitute the cluster. In them we find a well-integrated narrative, developed by fusing different anecdotes with a skill unusual in *Q2* material. This implies a later stage than *Q2*, and some of the incidental details within the cluster indicate the same conclusion. When, for example, Aṅgad and Mardānā lift the shroud to eat the corpse they discover not putrid flesh but confectionery.[2] This is rather more sophisticated than the *Narrative Ia* analogue, which makes Nānak magically replace the corpse with his own body.[3] Sophistication of detail is not characteristic of *Narrative II* material.

A second distinctive element within the cluster is the stress which it lays upon a particular point of doctrine. 'The Gurū is God and not a man,'

---

[1] The exception is the brief anecdote which relates how Bābā Nānak once summoned the Gaṅgā river to a group of thirsty Sikhs in a jungle. *AS*, p. 90. *Mih JS* II.175. See above, p. 31. Both versions claim that this story was related to Akbar. *AS*, p. 90. *Mih JS* II.137. The *Miharbān* version adds that the recitation took place on an occasion when Akbar met Gurū Arjan in Lahore. In the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* the cluster which includes this anecdote and the interview with God (*goṣṭ* 176) also includes a narrative account of how Bābā Nānak contracted a second marriage, the second wife being a Muslim woman of the Raṅghaṛ caste (*goṣṭ* 177). This story, which has been omitted from the published text of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, may possibly have been omitted by the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler for similar reasons. There is no evidence to suggest that the story has a factual basis.

[2] *AS*, p. 96. [3] *Pur JS*, p. 108. *GNSR*, p. 50.

it declares in sākhī 29a,[1] and repeats the claim in sākhī 29c.[2] This insistence, which provides the integrative principle linking the three parts of sākhī 29, is not to be found in *Q2*.

Thirdly, the lengthy digression which constitutes sākhī 29b has no parallel in *Q2* material; and finally it is difficult to understand why the *B40* compiler would have omitted these anecdotes had they been in *Q2*. The fact that he provides an alternative version of the installation of Gurū Aṅgad,[3] one which accords better with the general *Narrative II* style, suggests that *Q2* did not include these anecdotes.

Perhaps the most likely solution to the problem is a theory which envisages a later post-*Q2* extension of the *Narrative II* anecdote concerning Bābā Nānak's decision to test his Sikhs. This drew upon two sources. The first was the *Rāmāyaṇa* cycle, to which was added a narrative linking it to the *Narrative II* tradition and providing a context for the insistence upon Nānak's divinity. The second was a developed version of the corpse-eating anecdote, an anecdote which emerges in a cruder form in the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*. The distant connection with the *Narrative Ia* tradition indicated by the *Colebrooke* analogue continues up to the point where the compiler abandons his source during the course of his concluding sākhī. This source we shall designate *Narrative IIc*.

The last portion of the cluster is the most perplexing of all. Two obvious analogues exist, but neither enables us to make a positive identification. The first is *B40*, which records an appreciably longer and less coherent version of the death narrative.[4] Although there can be no doubt that *B40* and the *Ādi Sākhīs* have drawn from sources which must ultimately converge, it is equally obvious that the two versions are some distance apart. The greater length of the *B40* version can be explained only in part by the fact that the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler chose to take up his source during the course of its narrative rather than at its beginning. During the later stages *B40* adds extra material which the *Ādi Sākhīs* lacks, and in the process jumbles the various elements to a degree which may perhaps reflect a haste to be finished with the janam-sākhī. The *Ādi Sākhīs*, though briefer and more coherent than *B40*, also has its inconsistencies. The disciple who seeks freedom for his *kuṛam* is variously named Sādhāran (as in *B40*[5]) and Bhagīrath.[6]

The second analogue is to be found in *Bālā* manuscripts which have obviously derived their 'Death of Nānak' sākhī from the *Miharbān* tradition. The earlier and more consistent *Bālā* tradition terminated its account prior to the death of Nānak. This was necessary as Bhāī Bālā had previously been represented as a companion of the Gurū who had left him prior to his death. Inevitably the deficiency proved to be unsatisfying to *Bālā* audiences and a supplement was later added, wherein Gurū Aṅgad narrated for Bhāī Bālā's benefit an account of the Gurū's death.[7]

---

[1] *AS*, p. 91.   [2] *AS*, pp. 95, 97.   [3] *B40*, f. 98b.
[4] *B40*, ff. 221a–230a.   [5] *B40*, ff. 225b–226a, 228a–b.
[6] *AS*, p. 99. Cf. *B40*, f. 138b.
[7] Cambridge University Library MS Add. 921, ff. 198b–205b.

This account, as we have already observed, was taken from a *Miharbān* source.[1]

Are any of these three analogues copies of either of the others? It seems probable that at least the *Bālā/Miharbān* version was a copy and that it was taken from the *Ādi Sākhīs*. This is indicated by two features.

First, there is the convincing hypothesis that much of the *Ādi Sākhīs* text, particularly the sākhīs which are recorded in its latter part, has been copied by a *Miharbān* redactor. *Narrative II* borrowings by the *Miharbān* tradition have already been noted, and the same procedure has also been followed in the case of sākhī 29a–c of the *Ādi Sākhīs*. These sākhīs, expressed in the same integrated form, constitute *goṣṭ* 180 of the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*.[2] The fact that this *goṣṭ* immediately follows the analogue of sākhī 25 may possibly add further weight to the suggestion that sākhīs 26–8 represent an interpolated cluster within the later *Ādi Sākhīs* tradition. On the other hand it must be remembered that the constituents of this cluster also have their *Miharbān* analogues and that most of these immediately precede the *Miharbān* analogue of sākhī 25 in the *Ādi Sākhīs*.

The analogues of cluster 26–8 as they appear in the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* may, indeed, represent a case of double borrowing. Some of this cluster, having originally entered the *Ādi Sākhīs* from an early *Miharbān* source, could have passed back into a later *Miharbān* recension in their *Ādi Sākhīs* form. The same process may also have applied in the case of the Achal sākhī. This theory is perhaps open to some doubt, but the doubt does not extend to *goṣṭ* 180. *Goṣṭ* 180 of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* must certainly be a late borrowing by the *Miharbān* tradition from the *Ādi Sākhīs* or a source very close to it. From this it follows that a borrowing of sākhī 30b would be entirely natural.

The second feature which supports this conclusion is a clear break within the *Bālā* text. It appears from the *Bālā* manuscripts that their *Miharbān* source provided them with an account beginning at precisely the same point as sākhī 30b of the *Ādi Sākhīs*. For the earlier portions of its death narrative the *Bālā* account relies on a source very close to B40, perhaps on B40 itself.[3] It need occasion no surprise that the *Bālā* manuscripts do not follow a *Miharbān* version of the installation of Gurū Aṅgad, and that accordingly we possess no *Miharbān* analogue for sākhī 30a of the *Ādi Sākhīs*. The *Bālā* janam-sākhīs earlier record a different version of this episode, one which is important for the distinctive *Bālā* emphases which it expresses.[4] There was thus no need to copy the *Miharbān* version. This latter version, which like the death sākhī must have been included in the missing *Prem Pad Pothī* of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, will presumably have followed the *Ādi Sākhīs* text.

This eliminates the *Miharbān* tradition as an original source, but leaves

[1] See above, p. 19; also *AS*, p. *xxxv*, note.
[2] *Mih JS* II.148–52.
[3] CUL MS Add. 921, ff. 197a–198b.
[4] Ibid., ff. 181a–184b.
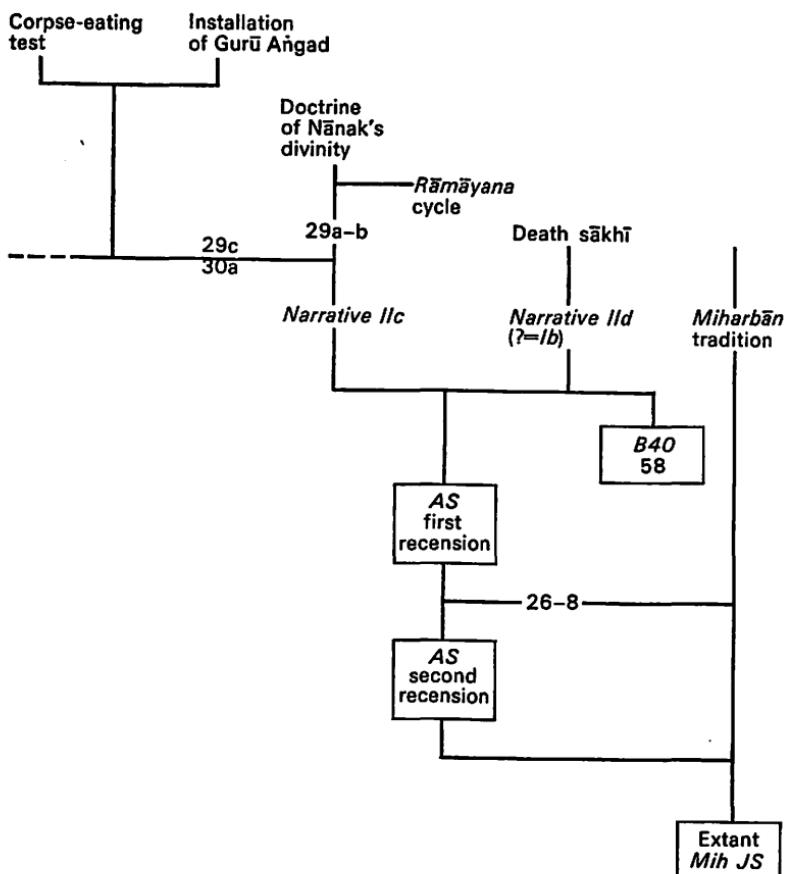
Figure 24

us unable to proceed further with any firm assurance. The hypothesis which seems to come closest to probability is that yet another *Narrative* source lay behind both accounts, and that for the area which it covers the *Ādi Sākhīs* version brings us nearer to this tradition than does the hetero-geneous *B40* sākhī. With considerable hesitation we designate this source *Narrative IId*, adding that it may perhaps coincide with *Narrative Ib*.

This latter possibility is suggested by the nature of the relationship between the *Ādi Sākhīs* and *B40* versions. On the one hand they are clearly relating the same anecdote; on the other, the two texts are distinguished by a considerable measure of disagreement. This is the kind of relationship which links the two janam-sākhīs at points where they use common material from the *Narrative Ib* tradition, and a comparison of the *Narrative Ib*
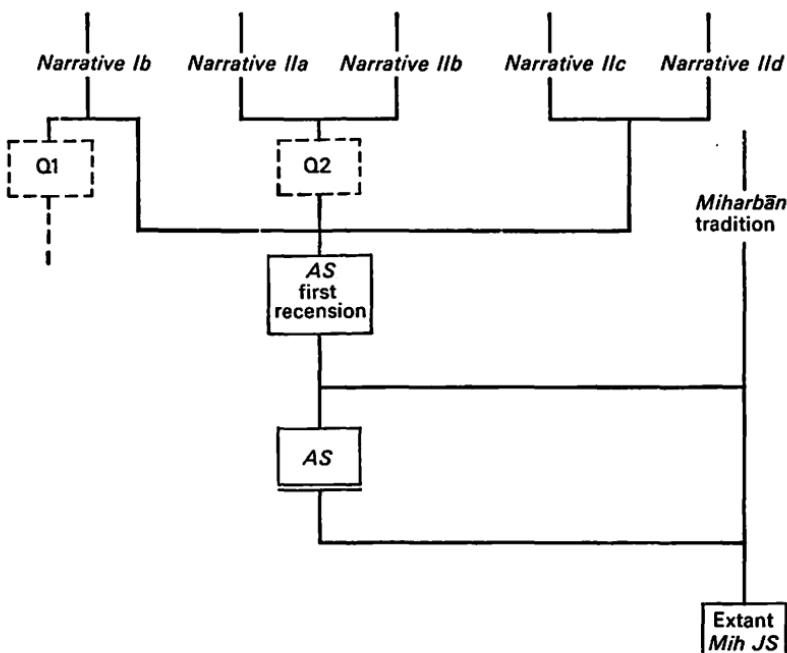
Figure 25

language in each janam-sākhī with its version of the 'Death of Nānak' sākhī offers some further support to the theory. There is the same mingling of Kharī Bolī forms in a predominantly Pañjābī text, such versions as *ākhan lagā* and *āi miliā* recur in all instances, and use is made of the relatively uncommon title 'Tapā' which *B40* employs in its version of the 'Death of Nānak' sākhī.[1]

It must, however, be acknowledged that this is a slender base upon which to erect a theory, for most of the similarities are to be found elsewhere in material which does not derive from the *Narrative Ib* tradition. The *Hāfizābād* manuscript does not help us at this point. Its failure to refer to the sākhī may merely mean that, as in other instances, its compiler preferred to use *Narrative Ia* material wherever possible. *Narrative Ib* remains a possible source, but not a proven one. An independent source could have equally strong claims. Finally, it should be noted that the *B40* compiler has evidently supplemented this principal source with material drawn from some other source or sources. The result is a composite sākhī at once the most muddled and the most sublime of all that the *B40* manuscript contains.

[1] For example *B40*, f. 224b. It has been translated as 'Master' in *B40(Eng)*.

The tentative pattern which now emerges for the five concluding sākhīs of the *Ādi Sākhīs* is shown in figure 24. Linked with the earlier paradigms this diagram produces the complete pattern for the sources of the *Ādi Sākhīs* shown in figure 25.

In this final diagram for the *Ādi Sākhīs* the upper link with the *Miharbān* tradition represents not only the cluster but also the later *Ādi Sākhīs* redactor's apparent reliance on his *Miharbān* source for his variant version of the sākhī 23 interpolation.[1]

Once again it is necessary to stress the tentative nature of portions of this *Ādi Sākhīs* pattern. It represents a combination of established sources and conjecture. The same qualification must be attached to the table, which indicates sources for individual sākhīs.

Sākhī no.	*Title of Anecdote*	*Source*
1.	An Interview with God	} *Narrative II (Q2)*
2a.	The Birth of Nānak	
2b.	Instruction by the Paṇḍit	
3a.	Bābā Nānak's Betrothal and Marriage	
3b.	The Ruined Crop Restored	
4.	The Tree's Stationary Shadow	
5a.	The True Field and the True Merchandise	
5b.	Bābā Nānak's Discourse with the Physician	*Narrative Ib*
6.	Sultānpur	
7a.	Immersion in the River	
7b.	Bābā Nānak's Discourse with Daulat Khān's Qāzī	
8a.	Bābā Nānak's Travels in the Uninhabited Wilderness	
8b.	Bābā Nānak's Austerities	
8c.	Bābā Nānak's Visit to the Pilgrimage Centres	
9.	The Country Ruled by Women	
10.	The Monster's Cauldron	
11.	The Encounter with Kaliyug	
12.	Sajjaṇ the Robber	*Narrative II (Q2)*
13.	Bābā Nānak in the Land of Unbelievers	
14.	Discourse with Siddhs on Mount Sumeru	
15.	Mecca: Bābā Nānak's Miraculous Arrival	

[1] See above, p. 205.

Sākhi no.	Title of Anecdote	Source
16.	Bābā Nānak returns to Talvaṇḍī	
17.	Discourse with Sheikh Braham	
18.	The Sack of Saidpur	
19.	Discourse with Bābur	
20.	The proud Karoṛī humbled: founding of Kartārpur	*Narrative Ib*
21a.	The Merchant and Rājā Śivanābh	
21b.	Bābā Nānak and Rājā Śivanābh	
22a.	The Meeting with Lahaṇā	
22b.	Aṅgad returns to Matte dī Sarāi	
22c.	Aṅgad moves to Khaḍūr: his clothes ruined	
23.	Discourse with Siddhs at Achal.	
24.	Mūlā the Khatrī	
25a.	Bābā Nānak's Daily Discipline	*Narrative II (Q2)*
25b.	The Loyal Fortitude of Aṅgad.	
25c.	Bābā Nānak's Adoration	
25d.	Discourse with Gorakhnāth: Bābā Nānak seeks solitude	
25e.	Bābā Nānak tests his Sikhs	
26.	A Recitation of *Japji*	
27.	Dead Birds Revivified: Bābā Nānak's Remorse	
28a.	An Interview with God: Recitation of *Sodar*	*Miharbān*
28b.	Bābā Nānak summons the Gangā to Thirsty Sikhs	
29a.	Bābā Nānak tests his Sikhs (contd.)	
29b.	The Story of Vasiṣṭ	
29c.	Bābā Nānak tests his Sikhs (contd.): Aṅgad commanded to eat the corpse	*Narrative IIc*
30a.	The Installation of Gurū Aṅgad	
30b.	The Death of Bābā Nānak	*Narrative IId* (? = 1b)

OTHER SOURCES OF THE B40 JANAM-SĀKHĪ

1. Narrative III

It has already been shown that much of the *B40 Janam-sākhi* derives from *Narrative I* and *Narrative II* sources. The third and last of the *B40* compiler's major narrative sources is the easiest of all to recognize. He does

not turn to it until he reaches sākhī 35 on folio 149b, but thereafter he uses it for most of the remainder of his janam-sākhī. Material drawn from this source runs without a break from sākhī 35 to sākhī 49, misses sākhī 50, and reappears with sākhī 51. The point at which the compiler finally abandons it is not clear. Another break certainly comes at the end of sākhī 51 and this may perhaps mark its terminus. There remain, however, two brief narrative sākhīs (56 and 57) which should perhaps be assigned to the same source. The nature of the narrative material which commences with sākhī 35 plainly indicates that this source cannot possibly be identified with any which have been included within either the *Narrative I* or *Narrative II* group. This source we shall designate *Narrative III*.

Most anecdotes drawn from the *Narrative III* tradition are readily distinguished by a number of characteristic features. In all cases their language is a simple, relatively modern Pañjābī, their sākhī structure is elementary yet generally consistent, and their narrative vigorous with little extraneous material. Within the entire cluster only one anecdote (sākhī 39) violates this rule of conciseness. Throughout the cluster there is a strong emphasis upon certain clearly defined ideals and in most sākhīs several formulae recur. In all sākhīs there is a complete absence of quotations from the works of Gurū Nānak.

The standard narrative pattern for these *Narrative III* anecdotes is as follows. Bābā Nānak arrives in a particular locality (commonly unspecified). Initially he is either neglected or positively rejected by the populace, but eventually one person is persuaded to associate with him and so to provide a means of contact with the local community. Having established this contact Bābā Nānak then performs a miracle, as a result of which the entire population is converted. To his new disciples he issues a set of stock instructions and then proceeds on his way.

It is in Bābā Nānak's concluding instructions and in the new disciples' response to them that the distinctive ideals and formulae of the *Narrative III* tradition are to be found. The most prominent feature of all is a brief threefold creed, *nām dān isnān*, which literally translated reads 'Name, Charity, and Bathing'. In the translation of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* it has been rendered: 'the discipline of repeating the divine Name, giving charity, and regular bathing'. Most sākhīs of the *Narrative III* tradition include this distinctive formula, sometimes in an expanded form,[1] but normally in its simple threefold expression.[2] It is at once a formula and an ideal, a brief credal statement which evidently enshrined all that was regarded as necessary for salvation. In almost all instances the verb which is attached to this formula is *diṛāiā*, 'inculcated' or 'instilled'.

A second basic formula occurring in most *Narrative III* sākhīs is the command to establish a *dharamsālā*, or place where the newly formed *saṅgat* (congregation) might meet for regular *kīrtan* (the singing of

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 157b, 162b, 170a.
[2] *B40*, ff. 155a, 157a, 165b, 167a, 169b, 173a, 174b, 176a, 176b, 186a, 190a, 193a, 205a. For a brief discussion of the formula see *B40(Eng)*, p. 110n. Gurū Arjan uses the formula in his shabad *Sirī Rāg* 21–2–29, *AG*, pp. 73–4.

devotional songs).[1] This image of the *sangat* gathered in the *dharamsālā* for *kīrtan* constitutes another of the central ideals of the *Narrative III* tradition, obviously reflecting a condition which actually existed in the contemporary Sikh community. It is also within this *Narrative III* tradition that we encounter the first signs of an emergent belief concerning the eternal presence of the Gurū within the gathered community of the faithful.[2] To this doctrine the *B40* compiler adds his own fervent assent.[3]

The invariable response of the newly converted Sikhs provides a third basic formula and corresponding ideal. Having accepted Nānak as Master, his new disciples at once adopt the practice of repeating the single word 'Gurū' (*gurū gurū lagā japan*).[4] Mechanical repetition of this word was evidently the understanding of *nām simaran* which the *Narrative III* tradition sought to inculcate. This is of considerable interest, for it diverges appreciably from the refined doctrine of *nām simaran* as taught by Nānak himself.[5] The *Narrative III* emphasis upon mechanical repetition, together with occasional references in other sources, indicates that the earlier pre-Nānak understanding of 'repeating the divine Name' very quickly reasserted itself within the community of his followers. Moreover, this particular formula is not confined to *Narrative III* sākhīs. Its appearance in other traditions, although less common than in *Narrative III*, indicates that the practice must have been extensively followed within the seventeenth-century community.[6]

These statements constitute the basic formulae of the *Narrative III* tradition. To them others of less significance may be added.

dhan eh deś jithai tusāḍe charan phirai, 'Blessed is this country wherein your feet have trodden.' Variant forms of the same formula use *bhāg* instead of *deś*, or *darśan hoiā* instead of *charan phirai*.[7]

tān sabhai sikh hoe, 'then all became Sikhs', or a variant of this form.[8]

maraṇ jīvaṇ kaṭiā, '[the transmigratory round of] death and rebirth was broken'.[9]

nihāl hoiā, 'he found happiness'.[10]

vāh gurū ākhi, 'Utter, "Praise to the Gurū" ', used not as salutation but as a magical formula.[11]

Narrative III sākhīs commonly apply the appellation *mahā purukh* ('Exalted One') to Bābā Nānak[12] and lay considerable emphasis upon the

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 155a, 157a, 158b, 162b, 165b, 167a, 170a-b, 173a, 174b, 176a, 185b, 193a. The formula occurs in two variant forms: *dharam-sālā hoiā* and *dharam-sālā badhiā*. These are sometimes expanded by the addition of the words *ghar ghar*, 'in every house', or *girāi girāi*, 'in every village'.

[2] *B40*, f. 197a. See below, p. 262.   [3] *B40*, f. 230b.

[4] *B40*, ff. 132a, 155a, 159a, 162b, 163a, 165b, 167a, 167b, 173a, 174b, 176a, 182a, 185b, 186b, 199a. In one place the formula is said to be *vāhī gurū, vāhī gurū*. *B40*, f. 196b.

[5] *GNSR*, pp. 214–19.

[6] For *Narrative Ia* examples see *Pur JS*, pp. 22, 27, 31, 33, 45, 71, 80, 89.

[7] *B40*, ff. 157a, 167b, 173a-b, 176a, 185b. Cf. also ff. 180a, 199a.

[8] *B40*, ff. 156b, 158b, 162b, 165b, 167a, 169b, 170a, 173a, 174b, 176a, 185b, 196b.

[9] *B40*, ff. 183a, 188b, 190a, 193a.

[10] *B40*, ff. 188b, 190a, 193a.   [11] *B40*, ff. 158a, 161a, 181b, 182b, 184b.

[12] *B40*, ff. 156a, 158b, 165a, 165b, 170a, 172b, 185a, 187b, 192b, 198b.

duty of *sevā*, or 'service', in the sense of ministering to the needs of visiting Sikhs.[1] In most instances these formulae occur towards the end of the sākhī and together constitute a standard conclusion for *Narrative III* stories. The closing sentences of sākhī 40 provide an illustration.

tā uhu mulaku sabho hi sikhu hoiā. lage gurū gurūjapaṇi. ate ghari ghari dharamusālā hoiā. tā gurū bābe unā nū nāmu dānu isanānu diṛāiā. us mulaku de lage ākhaṇi jo dhanu asāḍe bhāgu ju tusāḍā darasanu hoiā. et mulaku tusāḍe charanu phire.[2]

The entire population of that land became Sikhs. They took up repeating 'Gurū. Gurū' and in every house a dharamsālā was established. Gurū Bābā Nānak inculcated in them the threefold discipline of repeating the divine Name, giving charity, and regular bathing. Everyone in that land declared, 'Blessed is our destiny that we have beheld your presence and that your feet have trodden in this land.'

The style is unmistakable, and likewise the structure of the sākhīs which follow this standard pattern.

From where did the *B40* compiler obtain his *Narrative III* anecdotes? The distinctive features of the *Narrative III* material suggest that the actual source was not a manuscript but oral tradition. The simple structure, the vigorous narrative, and the repetition of particular words, expressions, and formulae all point to this conclusion.[3] Further support is provided by the complete absence of scriptural quotation; by the conspicuous lack of features which indicate copying from another manuscript (haplography, dittography, metathesis, incorrect reading, etc.);[4] by the failure of any earlier janam-sākhī to reproduce this material in a form resembling the *B40* version;[5] and by the relative modernity of the language used in the narrative. Anecdotes drawn from oral tradition will be expressed in the language current during the period in which they were recorded. As expressed in the *B40* collection *Narrative III* anecdotes accord well with early eighteenth-century usage.

These *Narrative III* anecdotes constitute the most primitive element in the *B40 Janam-sākhī*. In them we have an excellent example of the first stage in the development of the recorded janam-sākhīs. A series of anecdotes has been drawn from the current oral tradition, grouped in a crude sequence, and recorded in much the same manner as a narrator would have uttered them orally. The oral tradition from which they have been drawn would presumably be that of the *B40* compiler's own area. This suggests that the *Narrative III* source used by the compiler was probably the oral tradition current during the early eighteenth century in a portion of Gujranwālā District or the immediately adjacent area of Gujrāt District.

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 155a, 166a, 167a, 170b, 203a. Cf. also ff. 171b, 176b.

[2] *B40*, f. 173a-b.

[3] The material from this source provides examples not only of the Law of Repetition but also of the Law of the Number Three (viz. the formula *nām dān isnān*).

[4] See *B40(Eng)*, introduction, pp. 7, 12-13.

[5] Some *Narrative III* anecdotes are reproduced by a late manuscript, the so-called *Prāchīn Janam-sākhī*. See above, pp. 26-7. Some also appear in the *Nānak Prakāś*.

Narrative III sākhīs thus offer a generally consistent cluster of anecdotes, one which seems to have been recorded directly from an oral source. Having in this manner stressed both the general uniformity of the cluster and its immediacy to oral tradition we must now add three qualifications. The first arises from a comparison of the following two sākhīs with the *Narrative III* material surrounding them:

  43 a. Ajittā Randhāvā rebuked for greed
     b. Abdul Rahmān humbled
  44 a. Ajittā Randhāvā rebuked for revivifying dead birds at Achal
     b. A Visit to Ṭillā.

Sākhīs 43 and 44 do not present the distinctive *Narrative III* structure and they lack almost all the characteristic formulae. There can be no doubt concerning their close connection with the sākhīs which precede and follow, for the same language and idiom continues throughout the entire cluster. Moreover, the differences which distinguish the two sākhīs may perhaps be explained by the fact that they relate a different variety of anecdote. The likelihood still seems to be that the two sākhīs were recorded from the same oral source as the standard *Narrative III* material. The structural difference cannot, however, be overlooked and it raises the possibility that the *B40* compiler may have taken these two sākhīs from a different source.

The second qualification concerns the point at which the *Narrative III* material terminates. Specifically it concerns the question of whether or not the following brief sākhīs should be attributed to the *Narrative III* source:

  56. An injunction to recite the *Āratī Sohilā*
  57. The magnificence of Bābā Nānak's hymns.

This tiny cluster poses the same problems as sākhīs 43 and 44, enhanced by the fact that it has been recorded apart from the main *Narrative III* cluster instead of within it. On the one hand its two anecdotes lack the distinctive structure and formulae of the standard *Narrative III* pattern. On the other, they continue the same linguistic style and narrate a different variety of story. If they are not to be linked with the *Narrative III* cluster it will be necessary to postulate yet another narrative source, for there is little to support a connection with either *Narrative I* or *Narrative II*.

The third and final qualification merely repeats a point already made. It is, however, a point which deserves to be illustrated with reference to *Narrative III* material. Having stressed the distinctive qualities of the *Narrative III* tradition we must repeat that features indicating a distinctive tradition do not mean complete independence from other traditions. Even when the distinguishing features are as prominent as those of the *Narrative III* material this insistence must be maintained. Complete independence would mean no sharing of distinctive features and no analogues. In neither respect will the *Narrative III* tradition sustain a claim to complete independence.

Three examples of links connecting *Narrative III* with other traditions have already been noted. One of the distinctive formulae appears in the *B40* version of 'The Monster's Cauldron' sākhī (tentatively assigned to the

Narrative Ib tradition).[1] This may perhaps be a gloss by the *B40* compiler, for neither the *Narrative Ia* nor the *Narrative II* version of the anecdote contains it.[2] The same explanation cannot, however, be applied to the case of the two *Narrative III* portions which appear within the *Narrative II* material of *Q2*.[3] These represent a genuine penetration of *Narrative III* elements into a separate tradition. The process is scarcely surprising if, as we have already suggested, *Q2* is to be located in the same geographical area as *Narrative III*.

A more complex example of *Narrative III* influence is to be found in the *B40* version of the Śivanābh story (sākhīs 34a and 34b). In this version several of the distinctive *Narrative III* features appear and some of them occur more than once. Bābā Nānak does not inculcate the threefold *nām-dān-isnān* formula, but we do find that he inculcated the divine Word (*śabad diṛāiā*).[4] Stress is twice laid upon the building of a dharamsālā.[5] Śivanābh's slave-girls begin to chant 'Gurū, Gurū',[6] a reference is made to the *Narrative III* variety of *sevā*,[7] Bābā Nānak is frequently referred to as a *mahā-purukh*,[8] and Śivanābh declares in characteristically *Narrative III* style, '*dhan merā bhāg*.'[9] Other features strengthen this impression of *Narrative III* influence. 'The portals [of his understanding] opened' (*us de kapāṭ khuli gae*) is an unusual expression which occurs both in the Śivanābh story and in two sākhīs from the *Narrative III* cluster.[10] Finally, Śivanābh's collapse has an obvious parallel in the anecdote concerning Uttam Bhaṇḍārī and Sultānā Gujar.[11]

The two Śivanābh anecdotes are too highly developed to have been taken from the *Narrative III* source. There seems to be little doubt, however, that they have been strongly influenced by *Narrative III* style and ideals. This influence can be explained in the same manner as the elements which entered the *Narrative II* tradition. It has already been argued that the *B40* version of both parts of the Śivanābh story was derived from the *Narrative Ib* tradition. All the features mentioned above are to be found only in the *Narrative Ib* account of Śivanābh. They do not occur in the *Narrative Ia* tradition as represented by the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*.[12] This appears to support our earlier suggestion that *Q1* of the *Narrative Ib* tradition should also be located in the same geographical area as *B40*. Such a location would account for the appearance of so many *Narrative III* features in the *Narrative Ib* version of the Śivanābh story. It would also

---

[1] See above, p. 192.   [2] *Pur JS*, p. 82. *AS*, p. 28.   [3] See above, pp. 204–5.
[4] *B40*, f. 154a.   [5] *B40*, ff. 152b–153a, 154a.   [6] *B40*, f. 148b.
[7] *B40*, f. 146b.   [8] *B40*, ff. 140a, 140b, 142b, 143a, 143b, 149b, 150a.
[9] *B40*, f. 146a.   [10] *B40*, ff. 140a–b, 189b, 204b.   [11] *B40*, ff. 153a, 186a.
[12] The *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* does, however, include three of the *Narrative III* formulae near the conclusion of its Śivanābh sākhī: *janam maraṇu . . . kaṭiā, sikhu hoā*, and *gurū gurū lagā japani*. Photozincograph Facsimile, p. 335. *Pur JS*, p. 89. The third of these is found elsewhere in the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*, but the other two are distinctively *Narrative III* expressions. In place of the second the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* normally uses the formula *nāu dharik hoā*, 'he became a Name-believer'. *Pur JS*, pp. 22, 27, 31, 37, 45, 71, 79–80, 81, 82, 93. The appearance of the three formulae in this context suggests that the *Narrative Ia* tradition, though further removed from *Narrative III* oral tradition than *Narrative Ib*, was not altogether immune from it.

explain the appearance of the expression 'the portals [of his understanding] opened' in the *Narrative Ib* discourse with Bābur.[1]

Links with other traditions can also be found in a number of analogues. The two anecdotes which are common to *Narrative Ia* and *Narrative III* illustrate both the connection between the two traditions and also the distance which separates them. The anecdotes which, in the *B40* table of contents, bear the titles 'Bābājī visited Gujrāt' and 'A sākhī describing an encounter with robbers'[2] have analogues in the *Purātan* anecdotes entitled 'The Salvation of Dūnī Chand' (second part) and 'The Robbers' Salvation'.[3] In both cases the narrative differs considerably and in both the differences indicate the greater maturity of the *Purātan* version. The first has already been quoted in order to illustrate the manner in which an anecdote changes as it descends through different traditions.[4] The *B40* version of the second is actually longer than its *Purātan* counterpart, but lacks the shabad which has been attached to the latter and which distinguishes it as a more evolved product. Although the *Purātan* analogues were probably recorded at an earlier date than the *B40* versions they are actually later in terms of development.

Narrative III links with other traditions are certainly fewer and more tenuous than those which connect the *Narrative I* and *Narrative II* traditions or the sub-traditions within either. As these examples indicate, they do, however, exist. Their relative scarcity and the pronounced differences which distinguish them can evidently be explained by the oral quality of *Narrative III*. If this assumption is correct it means that the *B40* compiler was, at this point, carrying out the first stage in the development of the recorded janam-sākhīs. The fact that he was doing this in the year 1733 serves to illustrate the manner in which all stages could be operative at the same time. When set beside the blocks of material borrowed from other sources this large *Narrative III* cluster also illustrates the way in which several different forms and stages could be embodied within a single janam-sākhī. It is precisely because it incorporates so many different elements that the *B40* collection is of all janam-sākhīs the most interesting and useful.

2. *The* Miharbān *tradition*

All narrative sākhīs recorded in the *B40 Janam-sākhī* have now been assigned, confidently or tentatively, to their appropriate sources. The remaining *B40* sākhīs consist of two discourses borrowed from the *Miharbān* tradition and eight miscellaneous discourses inserted at various points throughout the janam-sākhī. Ideally any such reference to the *Miharbān*

[1] *B40*, f. 71a.

[2] *B40* sākhīs 47 and 48, ff. 189a–193a (Gurmukhī pagination), 228b (Arabic pagination). In the English translation of *B40* these sākhīs have been entitled respectively 'The Rich Man's Pennants' and 'The Robbers and the Funeral Pyre'.

[3] *Pur JS*, pp. 71, 32–3. *GNSR*, pp 45, 40–1. These two *Purātan* sākhīs are derived, through the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*, from the *Narrative Ia* tradition.

[4] See above, pp. 124–7.

tradition as a source should be preceded by a discussion of its own sources. This would, however, constitute a task of some considerable complexity, one which deserves a volume in its own right. Here we can do no more than note that the *Miharbān* tradition, having itself drawn on a number of sources, has regularly served as a source for other janam-sākhī collections.

One *Miharbān* borrowing within the *B40 Janam-sākhī* has already been noted.[1] This was merely a portion of a discourse interpolated in a *Q2* narrative sākhī. Later it was suggested that a small cluster of *Ādi Sākhīs* anecdotes might perhaps be another borrowing from the *Miharbān* tradition. This opinion, however, had to be qualified by a measure of doubt concerning the source and by an acknowledgement that the cluster, if in fact it had been derived from the *Miharbān* tradition, must represent a paraphrase rather than a copy.[2] It is only towards the end of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* that there appear complete discourses in the typical *Miharbān* style.

Although the *Miharbān* tradition in its various recensions owes some of its material to borrowings from narrative sources by far the greater portion of its content has been generated within the tradition itself in accordance with the obvious intention of its compilers and redactors. Narratives which describe the life and travels of Bābā Nānak express only a secondary purpose within the *Miharbān* tradition. Its primary purpose is, as we have already noted, exegesis of the works of Nānak. The distinctive form which it employs for this purpose is the *gosṭ*, literally 'discourse' but more accurately described as discourse plus exegetical supplement.

A *gosṭ* from the *Miharbān* tradition is easily recognized and for this reason there can be no doubt that sākhīs 54 and 55 of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* have been taken directly from this tradition.[3] Both are plainly discourses in the standard *Miharbān* style. In each instance the discourse begins with the characteristic *Miharbān* setting in Kartārpur, and following a brief introductory narrative the commentator turns to the quotation of passages from the works of Nānak and to the exegesis of these passages. The interlocutor who is introduced in order to pose necessary questions is one who commonly fulfils this role in the *Miharbān* tradition, namely Gurū Aṅgad.

The reason for introducing this small cluster from a *Miharbān* source evidently relates to the subject treated in the two discourses. The *Miharbān* commentators commonly chose their material in order to provide answers to questions of contemporary concern. One such issue was evidently the question of whether or not the early-morning bathe should be regarded as mandatory for all Sikhs, and within the *Miharbān* tradition an effort had been made to provide a divine sanction for the affirmative case by constructing a discourse from relevant works by Nānak. The effort was not entirely successful, and eventually the commentator, in order to clinch his argument, was compelled to put into Gurū Nānak's mouth words which were actually those of Gurū Aṅgad. The issue is treated at some length in the extant version of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, and it seems clear from the commentator's efforts to provide a conclusive answer that an important

<hr />

[1] See above, p. 205.   [2] See above, pp. 212–14.   [3] *B40*, ff. 210a–218a.

controversy within at least a section of the Sikh community must have lain behind the question.[1]

The importance of the controversy presumably accounts for this unique example of a direct *B40* borrowing of complete *goṣṭs* from a recension of the *Miharbān* tradition. This recension was obviously earlier than that of the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*. A comparison of the two *B40* sākhīs with the analogue in the extant version of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* indicates that the latter has been considerably developed.

3. Miscellaneous discourses

The eight remaining *B40* sākhīs form a miscellaneous collection of hetero-dox discourses, drawn from a variety of sources and recorded at several different points in the janam-sākhī. This final group comprises the following:

9. A discourse with Abdul Rahmān
15. A discourse with Shāh Rukandī
16. A discourse with Rattan Hājī
28. A discourse with Ajittā Randhāvā
33. A discourse with Kabīr
50. A discourse with Sheikh Sharaf
52. A discourse concerning true renunciation
53. Discourses with Gorakhnāth and with Kāl.

Heterodox discourses are easily distinguished from the characteristic didactic form of the *Miharbān* tradition and there is little likelihood that any of them could have entered *B40* from a *Miharbān* source.[2] The *B40* compiler will almost certainly have taken them from independent manu-scripts, some of which must have been limited to a single discourse. Manu-scripts of this kind are still extant and their existence indicates that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries extra-canonical compositions of this kind enjoyed an extensive popularity within the Sikh community.[3] It was inevitable that some of these works, or selections from them, should be incorporated in the janam-sākhīs, and in this manner eight such discourses found their way into the *B40 Janam-sākhī*. The number suggests that they held a considerable fascination for its compiler, or perhaps for its patron.

The eight discourses which have been included in the *B40 Janam-sākhī* can be distributed between two of the three categories of heterodox dis-course. Five of them belong to the popular Sūfism category. Rukn al-Dīn and Sharaf al-Dīn were both celebrated Sūfī pīrs;[4] and Rattan Hājī, though less famous internationally, must nevertheless have possessed a consider-able local following within the Pañjāb.[5] The meeting with Rukn al-Dīn

---

[1] *Mih JS* II.395–401. W. H. McLeod, introductory essay in *Mih JS* II.xi–xii.

[2] For a definition of the heterodox discourse form see above, pp. 101–4.

[3] Piār Singh, 'A Critical Survey of Panjabi Prose in the Seventeenth Century' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University, 1968), pp. 122–37.

[4] *B40*, ff. 53a, 200a.

[5] *B40*, f. 56a.

provides the occasion for introducing a work entitled the *Tih Sipāre*,[1] and to Rattan Hājī there is delivered a homily entitled the *Hāzar-nāma*.[2] Sheikh Sharaf, who is represented as a transvestite and located in Bāghdād, relates in verse the story of his failure to find union with God. Bābā Nānak replies with a brief poetic instruction in *Dhanāsarī* rāga.[3] Although Abdul Rahmān is remembered as a writer rather than as a pīr, the pattern followed in sākhī 9 indicates that this discourse should also be included in the popular Sūfism category.[4] Sākhī 52 names no interlocutor, adding instead the subtitle: 'A discourse took place with a learned faqīr'.[5] The content of the discourse certainly entitles it to be classified as a Sūfī-oriented work.

The three other discourses in this miscellaneous group can all be regarded as examples of esoteric Nāth-oriented compositions, although none of them gives particularly clear expression to *haṭha-yoga* doctrine. 'A Discourse with Ajittā Randhāvā' is perhaps more important as an expression of conflicts within the early eighteenth-century Sikh community.[6] The *haṭha-yoga* emphasis is similarly muted in the Kabīr discourse, although its presence can certainly be detected in the portions attributed to Gurū Nānak.[7] Finally there is sākhī 53, 'Discourses with Gorakhnāth and with Kāl'.[8] This brief composition is distinguished only by an abundance of cryptic allusions, producing a general impression of total obscurity. Once again *haṭha-yoga* concepts are nowhere expressed clearly and directly. The identity of the first interlocutor suggests, however, that this discourse should also belong to the third category. Its cryptic allusions may perhaps be a crude imitation of the 'intentional language' of the Nāths.

The fact that the eight miscellaneous discourses recorded by the *B40* compiler may be grouped in two categories should not imply that the compiler was using only two sources. Sākhīs 15 and 16 are almost certainly from a common source but there is no evidence of any such link connecting any of the remaining six discourses. The manner in which they are dispersed throughout the janam-sākhī suggests that several independent manuscripts (one of them incomplete[9]) were utilized by the compiler. In some instances he may perhaps have relied upon his own memory or upon an oral recitation.

A SUMMARY OF THE B40 SOURCES

The complete range of sources used by the *B40* compiler may now be summarized in tabular form.

[1] *B40*, ff. 53a–55b.
[4] *B40*, ff. 56a–57a. See *B40(Eng)*, p. 58n.
[3] *B40*, ff. 200a–202a. The *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* correctly places Sheikh Sharaf in Pāṇīpat, but his dates render any such meeting completely impossible. *GNSR*, p. 82.
[4] *B40*, ff. 177b–180a.
[5] *B40*, ff. 205b–207b.
[6] *B40*, ff. 111a–116b. See above, p. 104.
[7] *B40*, ff. 136a–138a.
[8] *B40*, ff. 208a–209a.
[9] Sākhī 28, 'A Discourse with Ajittā Randhāvā', lacks a beginning. *B40*, f. 111a.

Sākhi no.	Title of Anecdote	Source
1.	The birth of Nānak	
2a.	Instruction by the Paṇḍit	
2b.	Bābā Nānak's Betrothal and Marriage	
3.	The Ruined Crop Restored	
4a.	The Tree's Stationary Shadow	
4b.	The True Field and the True Merchandise	
5.	Bābā Nānak's Discourse with the Physician	Narrative Ib (Q1)
6a.	Sultānpur	
6b.	Immersion in the River	
6c.	Bābā Nānak's Discourse with Daulat Khān's Qāzī	
[6d.	Bābā Nānak's Departure from Sultānpur]	
7.	Bābā Nānak's Travels in the Uninhabited Wilderness	
8.	Bābā Nānak returns to Talvaṇḍī	
9.	A Discourse with Abdul Rahmān	Misc. Discourse
10.	The Monster's Cauldron	
11.	Bholā the Robber	
12a.	The Encounter with Kaliyug	Narrative Ib (Q1)
12b.	Lamenting women commended	
13.	A poor Sikh's devotion to Bābā Nānak	
14.	Mecca: the moving miharāb	
15.	A Discourse with Shāh Rukandī	Misc. Discourses
16.	A Discourse with Rattan Hājī	
17.	Bābā Nānak's Discourse with Sheikh Braham	
18a.	The Sack of Saidpur	Narrative Ib (Q1)
18b.	A Discourse with Bābur	
19.	The proud Karoṛī humbled: founding of Kartārpur	
20.	Bābā Nānak's austerities	
21.	Bābā Nānak's Visit to the Pilgrimage Centres	
22.	The Country Ruled by Women	Narrative II (Q2)
23.	Discourse with Siddhs on Mount Sumeru	
24a.	The Meeting with Lahaṇā	

Sākhi no.	Title of Anecdote	Source
24b.	Aṅgad returns to Matte dī Sarāi	
24c.	Aṅgad moves to Khaḍūr: his clothes ruined	
24d.	The Installation of Gurū Aṅgad	
25.	Mūlā the Khatrī	Narrative II (Q2)
26a.	Bābā Nānak's Daily Discipline	
26b.	The Loyal Fortitude of Aṅgad	
27a.	Bābā Nānak's Adoration	
27b.	Discourse with Gorakhnāth: Bābā Nānak seeks solitude	
28.	Discourse with Ajitta Randhāvā	Misc. Discourse
29.	Discourse with Siddhs at Achal	
30.	An Interview with God	
31.	Bābā Nānak in the Land of Unbelievers	Narrative II (Q2)
32.	Mecca: Bābā Nānak's Miraculous Arrival	
33.	Discourse with Kabīr	Misc. Discourse
34a.	The Merchant and Rājā Śivanābh	Narrative Ib (Q1)
34b.	Bābā Nānak and Rājā Śivanābh	
35a.	Bābā Nānak's Visit to Kābul	
35b.	Water restored to a Land of Giants	
36.	A Visit to Bhūṭān	
37.	Cakes miraculously cooked	
38.	Bābā Nānak's Visit to Kashmīr	
39.	Bābā Nānak enslaved in the Land of the Paṭhāns	
40.	Bābā Nānak provides grain and fire	
41.	Floods banished from a land beside the sea	
42.	A Demon Arsonist converted	
43a.	Ajittā Randhāvā rebuked for greed	Narrative III
43b.	Abdul Rahmān humbled	(Oral Tradition)
44a.	Ajittā Randhāvā rebuked for revivifying dead birds at Achal	
44b.	A Visit to Ṭillā	
45.	Uttam Bhaṇḍārī and Sultānā Gujar: Springs from a mountain-side	
46.	A Visit to Hivanchal: Discourse with Datta	
47.	The Rich Man's Pennants	
48.	The Robbers and the Funeral Pyre	
49a.	A Robber Landowner Converted	
49b.	A Rājā's daughter turned into a boy	

Sākhi no.	*Title of Anecdote*	*Source*
50.	A Discourse with Sheikh Sharaf in Bāghdād	} *Misc. Discourse*
51.	The Reward of Meeting a Sādhū	} *Narrative III (Oral Tradition)*
52.	A Discourse concerning True Renunciation	} *Misc. Discourses*
53.	Discourses with Gorakhnāth and with Kāl	
54.	The Way of Salvation: A Discourse which Gurū Bābā Nānak held with Guru Angad	} *Miharbān Tradition*
55.	Another Discourse with Gurū Angad concerning the Way of Salvation	
56.	An Injunction to Recite the *Āratī Sohilā*	} *Narrative III* (?)
57.	The Magnificence of Bābā Nānak's hymns	
58.	The Death of Bābā Nānak	} *Narrative IId*

Of these sources *Narrative III* was almost certainly an oral tradition. Some of the *Miscellaneous Discourses* may also derive from an oral tradition, but not from the same cycle as the *Narrative III* anecdotes. The remainder were all documentary sources. In diagrammatic form this pattern may be represented as in figure 26.
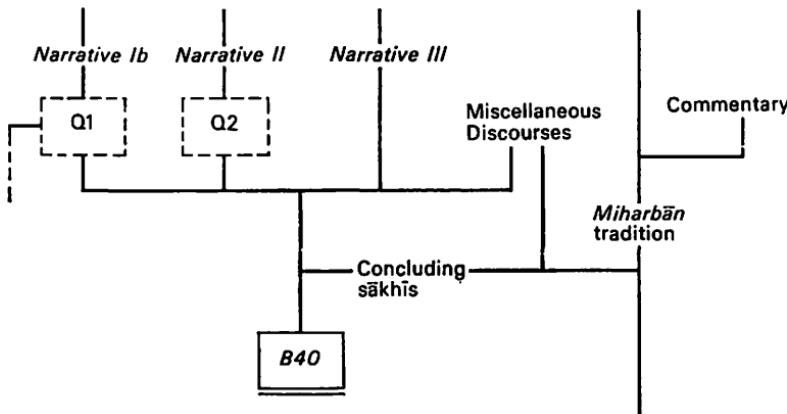
Figure 26
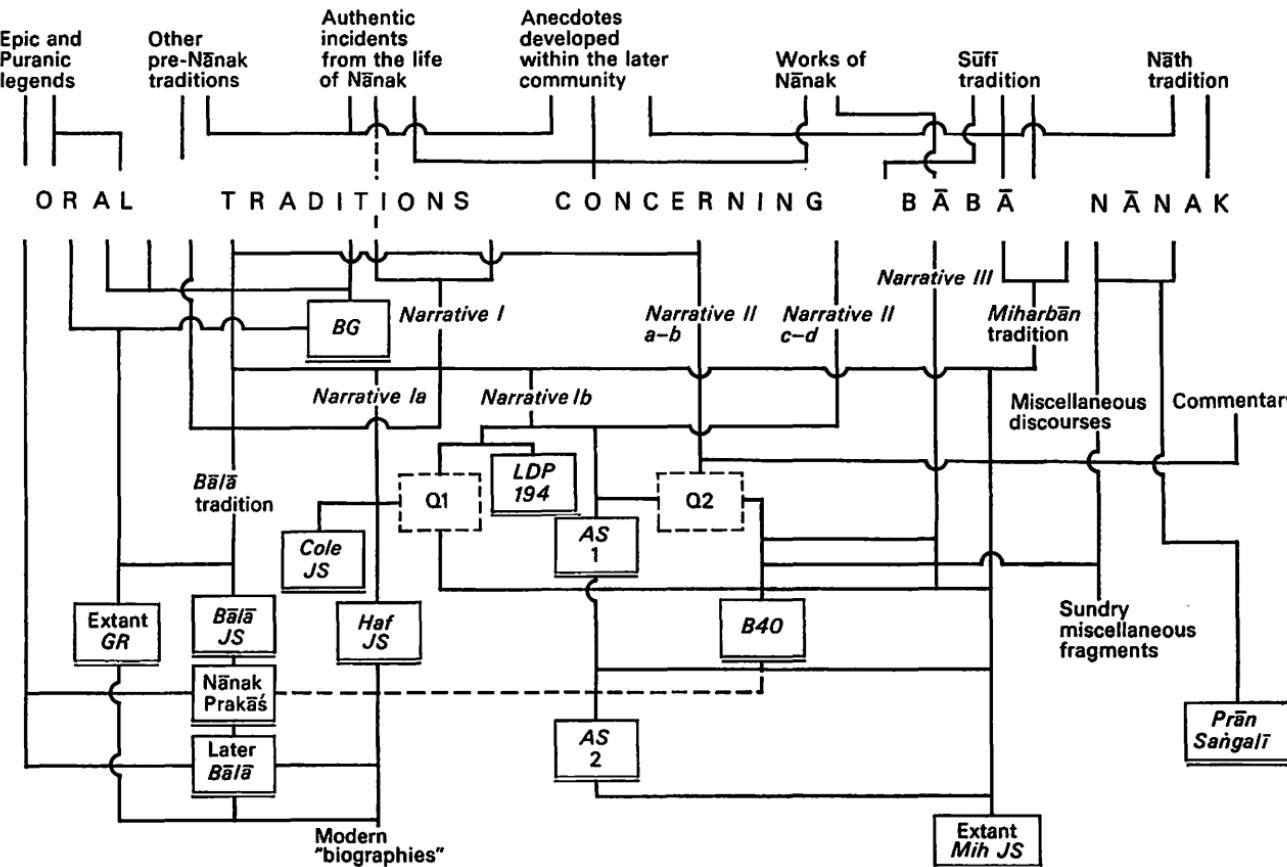
Figure 27

A SUMMARY OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪ SOURCES

In the course of this analysis particular attention has been paid to the *B40 Janam-sākhī* and the *Ādi Sākhīs*. The same attention could also be directed to the other important janam-sākhīs, with varying degrees of success, eliciting patterns of varying complexity. It must surely be obvious that any attempt to combine all within a single, comprehensive pattern will be, in some measure, foredoomed to failure. Quite apart from the impossible complexity of such a diagram there would be the risk of imputing total assurance to a pattern which must still remain tentative at certain points.

A simplified paradigm can, however, be devised and figure 27 represents an attempt to do so. It must be stressed that notwithstanding its apparent complexity this diagram is considerably simplified at several points. Four areas to which this observation should be particularly applied are the *Bālā* tradition, the *Gyān-ratanāvalī*, the *Narrative Ia* tradition, and the *Miharbān* tradition. If due allowance is made for these shortcomings the diagram can serve its intended purpose of providing an over-view of the entire janam-sākhī field. If it be urged that the summary diagram is still excessively intricate it can only be answered that the material which it represents is, in actual fact, exceedingly intricate. Any further simplification of the paradigm might well obscure this basic fact.

SECTION III

11
PURPOSE, FUNCTION, VALUE

ALTHOUGH the Sikh Gurūs are all regarded as manifestations of the same divine spirit two of the ten have in practice been accorded a particular affection, a loyalty of unusual intensity and duration. The two are the first and the last of the line, Gurū Nānak and Gurū Gobind Siṅgh. Both have been associated with particular phases in the development of the Sikh Panth and it is as symbols of these two major phases that their respective images have been of such substantial importance. Gurū Nānak stands as the image and ideal of the pre-Khālsā stage, the period in which the Panth's primary concern attached to a distinctively religious message. Gurū Gobind Siṅgh, in contrast, has symbolized the Khālsā era, the period in which primary allegiance moved away from the earlier soteriological concern to sociological patterns deriving from the dual impact on the Panth of Jaṭ custom and eighteenth-century disturbances.[1] Each period has given rise to a single dominant myth. The image of Gurū Nānak enshrines one of these; the image of Gurū Gobind Siṅgh expresses the other.

The janam-sākhīs belong to the period of religious ascendancy and for this reason they are exclusively concerned with the first of these images. It is an avowedly religious purpose which the janam-sākhī compilers pursue, and their products continue to serve a viable function for as long as religious interests retain a primacy within the Panth. Only when the religious concerns are largely submerged in the eighteenth-century flood do the janam-sākhīs become increasingly dysfunctional. New needs demand new ideals and new vehicles for those ideals. Functional substitutes are required for a role which the janam-sākhīs can no longer fulfil with a sufficient competence. The janam-sākhīs did not, however, suffer a total eclipse, for the community was not wholly transformed by its eighteenth-century experience. The teachings of Bābā Nānak have certainly not been lost, and wherever a concern for his message of salvation has survived there the janam-sākhīs have sustained their pre-Khālsā role. Even where they have lost much of their functional importance they have lost little of their audience appeal. To this day the janam-sākhīs are widely read in Sikh homes and gurdwaras, and evidences of a final recession have yet to appear in rural Pañjāb.

It will be noted that these comments concern the *function* of the janam-sākhīs within the Sikh community. The function of the janam-sākhīs must be clearly distinguished from their purpose, and it is because this distinction can be drawn so clearly that the two aspects of the janam-sākhī

[1] W. H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Oxford, 1976), chaps. 1 and 3.

literature will be treated separately in the brief analysis which follows. Questions of purpose relate to the motives and intentions of narrators, compilers, and redactors; whereas the function of the janam-sākhīs concerns the role which they have played in the history of the Panth. This role accords only partially with the conscious intentions of the narrators and their later editors. It was a much more subtle need which provided the janam-sākhīs with their primary function and which earned them a significant status during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This is made clear by the manner in which the janam-sākhīs retreated from the centre of the community's life as the distinctively religious interest receded, and by the corresponding advance of functional substitutes fulfilling the same role in a strikingly different way. The primary function which they served from the late sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century must be construed in terms of panthic cohesion, a role which the narrators and compilers would never have suspected.

A functional analysis will reveal something of the importance of the janam-sākhīs for the Sikh Panth of three hundred years ago. This constitutes a major aspect of their importance as historical source material. Their chief value in this respect is closely related to their functional role. The janam-sākhīs' most notable fulfilment of their functional role took place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the period of their principal expansion. Because they were evolving during this period (and particularly during the seventeenth century) the janam-sākhīs record much that derives directly from its circumstances. As such they constitute a primary source for the two centuries extending from the late sixteenth century to the eighteenth century.

For this period the principal interest concerns the evidence provided by the janam-sākhīs of a religious community striving towards identity and self-understanding. Less obvious but nevertheless important are the recurrent glimpses of the wider life of the Pañjāb. For too long historians of Mughal Pañjāb have relied almost exclusively upon the standard Persian chronicles. The Persian chronicles do indeed retain a considerable value, particularly the relevant sections of Abu al-Fazl's *Ā'in-i-Akbari* and Sujān Rāi Bhaṇḍārī's *Khulāsāt-ut-Tavarikh*. Alone, however, they are inadequate, for their range is strictly limited by their distinctive interests. The janam-sākhīs are also inadequate if compelled to stand alone, but at least their locus is the rural society so commonly ignored by the chronicler. For this reason the janam-sākhīs provide a valuable supplement to the Persian chronicles and the reports of early European visitors.

The value of the janam-sākhīs as historical source material is discussed in the fourth chapter of this section. In the fifth and concluding chapter there follows a brief note on the importance of the janam-sākhīs in the history of Pañjābī language and literature. This importance is twofold. The janam-sākhīs warrant attention as the first examples of sustained Pañjābī prose, and also as a continuing influence upon later creativity. The latter feature can be easily appreciated when one becomes aware of the extent to which the janam-sākhīs have been read in Sikh homes and gurd-

waras. Together with the Ādi Granth, the works of Muslim Sūfīs from the Pañjāb, and eventually the example of western models, they rank as a major influence in the development of Pañjābī literature. When Pañjābī eventually receives the attention it deserves the janam-sākhīs will receive a significant share of this recognition.

12
THE PURPOSE OF THE
JANAM-SĀKHĪS

He who from the depths of his being reads and hears this testimony will find salvation. Of this there is no doubt.[1]

IT is at once obvious that an important reason for the popularity of the janam-sākhīs has been an inveterate taste for anecdotes and wonder-stories. It is also evident that this affection was not confined to audiences, but that it extended also to the narrators who related the tales and to the compilers who gathered them into janam-sākhīs. The janam-sākhīs contain an abundance of these stories, many of which have lost nothing of their interest with the passing of several centuries.

It would, however, be entirely mistaken to interpret the purpose of the narrators and the compilers as the mere delectation of their audiences. The popularity of anecdote and legend was a means to a nobler end, to an objective which most compilers express in explicit terms at appropriate points in their collections. Salvation is the issue which concerns them and the promulgation of a particular way of salvation constitutes their conscious intention. This salvation is to be won through an acceptance of Bābā Nānak as Master. Nānak preached a particular method of attaining release from the cycle of death and rebirth. He who accepts Bābā Nānak as his guide and model will himself attain to the same salvation. In order to understand the method three things are essential. First, he must heed the actual words of the Master as enshrined in his sacred utterances; secondly, he must listen to the exemplary narratives of the Master's life; and thirdly he must join the community of the Master's followers. The janam-sākhīs served the second of these needs and increasingly they served the first also. The third must be the responsibility of the disciple, but at least the janam-sākhīs could be used to make his duty clear.

This is an explicitly soteriological concern and in giving expression to it the janam-sākhī narrators and compilers were following in the footsteps of their acknowledged Master. Nānak's own central and ever-present purpose had been salvation, and the janam-sākhīs remain faithful to this intention. There is, however, a radical shift of emphasis. Nānak insists repeatedly that salvation is to be obtained by hearkening to the divine Word (*śabad*) of the Gurū and, in accordance with the inward revelation imparted by the divine Word, by regular meditation upon the divine Name (*nām*). The janam-sākhīs do use the term *nām* in a sense akin to Nānak's meaning,[2] but

---

[1] *B40*, f. 116b.   [2] Cf. *B40*, f. 120a.

the words *śabad* and *guru* have in their janam-sākhī usage acquired significantly different meanings. The *guru* is no longer the inner voice of God, but the personal manifestation of that voice in Bābā Nānak. From this it follows that the divine Word must be identified with the actual utterances of Nānak, and so the term *śabad* (shabad) is almost exclusively used as a synonym for a *pada* or 'hymn' of Nānak. The same usage is also applied to the compositions of his successors, for all are but different manifestations of the same single Guru.

The principal features of this janam-sākhī doctrine of salvation may be traced through a number of quotations. A basic element is the concept of *nām japan* or *nām simaran* as it was understood over a wide area of North Indian devotional life during this period. 'Remembrance of the divine Name' was practised in two ways, one individual and the other corporate. The individual discipline consisted of repeating a chosen word or *mantra* for protracted periods, the belief being that the qualities of the chosen word or *mantra* could thereby be acquired by the devotee. Mechanical repetition of this sort clearly had serious limitations as far as Nānak was concerned, but the janam-sākhīs plainly indicate that many of his later followers did not share his misgivings.[1]

The janam-sākhīs were, however, in complete accord with Nānak's interpretation of corporate 'remembrance'. Both for the Master and for his followers, as also for numberless other inheritors of the North Indian devotional tradition, the way of salvation required participation in the *satsang*, the congregation of the faithful. Salvation depended not merely upon individual devotion (however it might be understood and practised) but also upon the singing of God's praises (*kīrtan*) at regular gatherings of the *satsang*. It was for this purpose alone that the *satsang* gathered, and in singing together each participant absorbed not merely the qualities of the divine words which he sang but also the qualities of the other pious participants. This activity was a prerequisite to salvation and it is clear that Nānak's own works were composed for use in this particular context.

The singing of *kīrtan* within the regular *satsang* was accepted as normative by the janam-sākhī narrators and one of their purposes was to encourage the practice. It was, however, no more than a part of their wider concept of salvation. Devotional songs abounded, but all were by no means equal in value. Supreme value attached only to those of Bābā Nānak and, later, to those of his successors. The loyalty of the Sikh community was not to an idea nor to a particular doctrine of salvation but to the person who had propounded the doctrine with a unique clarity and beauty. Faith was due not to a theory but to a particular person.

This faith is explicitly affirmed at various points in the janam-sākhī literature, sometimes as a terminal declaration by a narrator or compiler, and sometimes as a statement attributed to one of the dramatis personae. A *Miharbān* discourse concludes with the following affirmation:

Guru Bābā Nānak is the vessel which carries us across the Ocean of the World. Guru Bābā Nānak has carried over the entire world. He who becomes a Nānak-

[1] Cf. *B40*, f. 118b.

panthī will be carried across. He who cleaves to the divine Word of Gurū Bābā Nānak shall be saved. Such was the grace of Gurū Bābā Nānak that he imparted the divine Name to the entire world. Glory be to Gurū Bābā Nānak! Praise be to Gurū Bābā Nānak, the True Gurū Bābā Nānak![1]

The status which is thus attributed to Bābā Nānak is explicitly declared to be the result of a divine commission received direct from God. This is made clear by the various versions of the sākhī entitled 'An Interview with God'.[2]

Datta the Sage carries the attribution of divinity one stage further. Bābā Nānak is not merely a supreme teacher. He is *jotī sarūp*, the divine effulgence, God Himself incarnate in human form for the salvation of the world.

Blessed are you Bābā Nānak! Blessed are you Bābā Nānak! And blessed is this which you have done! You are yourself God, but for the salvation of the world you have come in this human guise. If anyone beholds your presence, sings and recites your sacred words, and instructs others in the recitation and singing of them he will be exalted. For him the round of birth and death will be brought to an end.[3]

It will be observed that three qualifications are specified as essential to salvation. The first is to behold the presence of Bābā Nānak (*darśan*); the second is to sing and recite his sacred utterances (*śabad*); and the third is to teach others the same way of salvation. The janam-sākhīs are concerned with all three but above all with the first. This need they alone can meet. While Bābā Nānak was present in the flesh *darśan* could be obtained by visiting him in Kartārpur or by meeting him during the course of one of his journeys. The same purpose might be achieved up to the beginning of the eighteenth century by appearing before one of the successor Gurūs, but as the community grew in numbers and in geographical distribution such personal visits became increasingly difficult. Moreover, an occasional encounter was no substitute for a permanent presence.

The primary purpose of the janam-sākhīs was to provide that permanent presence, or at least a satisfactory substitute. Death, disability, or distance need raise no insuperable obstacle to regular *darśan*, for *darśan* could be obtained through the true testimony (*sākhī*) of the Gurū's life and utterances. The understanding of *darśan* which this implied was the same as the understanding of a personal *darśan*. Whereas for some devotees a personal visit to the chosen Master would necessarily involve some direct teaching and also some observing of the Master's own example, others would be content merely to appear before him. The same variety of understanding could also be applied to the janam-sākhīs. For some there would necessarily be a conscious acceptance of the model set forth in the words of the testimony; for others it would be sufficient merely to hear the words.

Most of the narrators would, of course, belong to the former group. Their intention was not simply to tell a pious tale but also to point

---

[1] *Mih JS* II.178. Cf. also *Mih JS* I.461 (*goṣṭ* 137).
[2] *B40*, ff. 123b–126b. *AS*, pp. 1–3. *Pur JS*, pp. 14–16.   [3] *B40*, f. 188a–b.

deliberately to a particular pattern of pious behaviour. Faith alone was not enough. There must also be personal participation. For the narrator of the *Narrative III* tradition this is expressed in the insistent repetition of the formula *nām dān isnān*, the threefold discipline of repeating the divine Name, giving charity, and regular bathing. Occasionally the same narrator is even more specific, as in the prologue attached to the story of Mūlā the Khatrī.

Bābā Nānak revealed to the world a wise and enlightened belief concerning the remembrance of God. He established dharamsālās throughout the world and inculcated the virtues of remembrance of the divine Name, charity, bathing, mercy, and the performance of one's appointed duties (*dharma*). He would say, 'Son, if anyone is my Sikh let him remain firmly rooted in three things. In what three things? In the divine Name, charity, and bathing.'[1]

The disciple of Bābā Nānak is to follow a distinctive belief concerning the remembrance of God (*paramesar kā simaran*); he is to forgather regularly with the *satsaṅg* in the dharamsālā; and he is to observe a number of devout practices. All of these instructions proceed from Bābā Nānak himself. The *sākhīān* bear testimony to this authority and provide in their descriptions of the Gurū's life the perfect model of their fulfilment.

The purpose of the janam-sākhī narrators was thus to set forth a soteriological interpretation of the life of Nānak. This interpretation constitutes the myth of Nānak, a myth which is expressed in anecdote, in discourse, and in an occasional declaration of faith. A part of the intention was evidently the conversion of others to the same interpretation; an even greater part was obviously the confirming and strengthening of the faithful. For this reason the sākhīs were written down and then regularly read in the dharamsālās (which eventually became gurdwaras) and in the homes of devout Sikh families. No janam-sākhī contributor has expressed the basic purpose with greater force and clarity than the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler, and his closing declaration is worth repeating.

He who reads or hears this sākhī shall attain to the supreme rapture. He who hears, sings, or reads this sākhī shall find his highest desire fulfilled, for through it he shall meet Gurū Bābā Nānak. He who with love sings of the glory of Bābā Nānak or gives ear to it shall obtain joy ineffable in all that he does in this life, and in the life to come salvation.[2]

---

[1] *B40*, f. 100a.   [2] *AS*, p. 101.

13
THE FUNCTION OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS

THE function of the janam-sākhīs must be clearly distinguished from their avowed purpose. Whereas their purpose concerns the conscious intention of their authors, their function concerns the role which they actually played within the later community.[1] There can be no doubt that the intention was in some considerable measure fulfilled and that to this extent the janam-sākhīs performed a function which corresponded to their purpose. This was not, however, their principal role. Their principal function was the maintenance of the community's cohesion during the pre-Khālsā period.[2] Although it was not the only cohesive agent during this period it was certainly a very important one, and it was largely because they fulfilled the cohesive role so well that the janam-sākhīs flourished during the seventeenth century. The seventeenth-century momentum continued into the following period and then weakened as eighteenth-century circumstances created new needs which they were ill suited to serve. During the Siṅgh Sabhā renewal movement of the late nineteenth century they recovered a considerable measure of their popularity, but never regained the stature which they had possessed during the seventeenth century.

For the first Sikhs identity and cohesion presented no problems. The first Sikhs were the disciples who gathered around Bābā Nānak during the first half of the sixteenth century, and for as long as their Master was present in the flesh there could be no serious difficulty as far as self-definition was concerned. Bābā Nānak provided in his person a focus for the loyalty of his disciples and no bond was needed other than their common allegiance to him. For this stage the word *sikh* is best represented with a lower-case initial letter. The word simply means 'disciple', and the principal difference distinguishing this particular group of disciples from innumerable others was their decision to accept Bābā Nānak of Kartārpur as their spiritual guide. A more appropriate designation for this stage (and one which the janam-sākhīs normally use in preference to *sikh*) is *nānak-panthī*. The early community constituted a panth, a loose congeries linked by a common ideal. Bābā Nānak provided in his person and in his teachings that ideal, and accordingly the panth of his followers bore his name.

---

[1] For a definition and discussion of the term 'function' as opposed to 'purpose' or 'motive' see Robert K. Merton's essay, 'Manifest and Latent Functions', in his *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe: the Free Press, 1957), pp. 19–84.

[2] In Merton's usage the fulfilment of the intended purpose constitutes a 'manifest function', and the more significant but unforeseen role a 'latent function'. Op. cit., p. 51.

For as long as Nānak lived in Kartārpur the question of identity required no attention, nor did it seriously concern the growing community during the period immediately following his death. Nānak had, in the usual manner, appointed a chosen disciple to succeed him as leader of the community, and the loyalty due to the first Gurū was automatically transferred to the second. This succession continued until the death of Gurū Gobind Siṅgh in 1708, not without challenge from various contenders but generally stable and always commanding a majority allegiance within the community. Its authority was considerably increased by attaching to it the ancient theory of spiritual transmission represented in the image of a succession of torches. Though the torches be many the flame is the same. Ten men were successively Gurū, but a single spirit inhabited them all and all bore the name Nānak.[1]

This projection of the first Gurū's personal authority through a line of successor Gurūs constituted the principal cohesive agent up to the death of the tenth Gurū in 1708. It was not, however, the only means devised by the community to determine its identity and maintain its cohesion. The personality of the first Gurū was projected not merely through the line of successors but also through the janam-sākhīs. Both the dynastic succession and the hagiographic tradition were fulfilling the same function in essentially the same way. Both were concerned with authority, identity, and cohesion; and both served these needs by sustaining a continuing loyalty to the person of the Gurū. The same answer could still be given to the ever-present question: What is a Sikh? A Sikh could still be defined as one who followed the Gurū.

This cohesive role the janam-sākhīs fulfilled by providing a single focus for a common loyalty. The single focus was not primarily any set of doctrines. The teachings of Nānak were certainly of vital importance, and the continuing reinterpretation of those teachings was a task necessarily imposed by a new experience and a new constituency. It was however the person of the community's first teacher which provided the actual focus, and in so far as any doctrines served to identify the community they did so only through a close connection with the acknowledged Master. Doctrine is in practice a treacherous maze within which a sect or community soon loses its compact unity. Loyalty to a person is a far more effective means of maintaining sectarian or communal cohesion, and although the janam-sākhī narrators could hardly have been aware of this fact their products certainly followed the more effective way. It is always the personality of the Gurū which receives their primary attention. Although later janam-sākhī narrators, and specifically the *Miharbān* commentators, developed a considerable interest in doctrinal issues, they were always careful to relate these issues directly to their image of Bābā Nānak.

The only point at which the janam-sākhīs do suggest an awareness of functional issues is in their occasional insistence that those who put their faith in Bābā Nānak must also identify themselves with the

[1] The Gurūs who composed shabads and shaloks all refer to themselves as 'Nānak' in these compositions.

community of his followers. To Aṅgad Bābā Nānak is said to have declared:

If anyone bears the title of *nānak-panthī* he will be saved.[1]

It is, however, no more than a vague awareness, and the precise meaning of such statements must always be obscured by the indistinctness of the word *panth*. Although such references do indicate a community struggling towards definable identity, they do not imply a clear consciousness of the issues involved in the endeavour. For the janam-sākhī narrators and compilers the maintenance of a single focus served a purpose which must be distinguished from its more important function.

It is, of course, an image of Nānak which provides this vital focus. The historical Nānak was soon replaced by the Nānak of myth and it was this latter figure to whom the common allegiance was so insistently directed. It was, moreover, a variable image. The community could never remain static, and any significant change in its needs and its self-understanding eventually produced a corresponding amendment of the image. The janam-sākhīs clearly reflect a community striving over a period of more than a century to attain an understanding of its own identity. The person and the teachings of the acknowledged founder provide the common loyalty and the common ideal. As new situations develop they raise new questions and demand different responses. The authentic person and teachings of Nānak provide a convenient core to which are added theories and conclusions emerging from subsequent experience.

These theories and conclusions are in some instances to be traced to a resurgence of earlier pre-Nānak ideals, and in others to social and economic pressures of the later Gurū period. Considerable changes inevitably resulted, but one thing remained constant. Loyalty to the person of the first Gurū remained a *sine qua non*. The person who owned this allegiance thereby qualified as a Nānak-panthī, and the common allegiance shared by all members of the Panth provided the essential cohesive factor. The theory was not a complete success, for schism did develop, and some contenders to the succession claiming to be the true heirs to the first Gurū's authority managed to detach segments of the community. It was, however, a generally successful ideal and a considerable measure of its success must be traced to the traditions concerning the first Gurū, both in their oral expression and in their recorded janam-sākhī form.

Throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth, oral tradition and the janam-sākhīs continued to serve this function. Their decline came when the death of the last personal Gurū and the confused events of the eighteenth century forced a radically different situation upon the Panth. The inevitability of a later transformation had already been assured by the entry into the Panth of substantial numbers of Jaṭs. In 1708 the death of Gurū Gobind Siṅgh produced a leadership crisis, and the turmoil which persisted throughout the eighteenth century provided the occasion for a radical change in Sikh identity. Two elements within this situation

[1] *B40*, f. 105a. Cf. also ff. 125a–126a.

dictated the actual form of the change. One was the dominant Jaṭ constituency and the other was the fact that the invasions of Ahmad Shāh Abdālī (1747–69) came to be understood as a war of Muslims against Sikhs. A third which also exercised some influence was the impact of Śakti ideals. The sixth Gurū, Hargobind, had moved to the Śivalik Hills in 1634 and all his successors spent substantial periods in this area. Śakti beliefs were strong in the Śivaliks and their influence can be detected in some of the later Sikh developments.

The principal elements were, however, the Jaṭ constituency and the conflict with Muslims imposed by the Afghān invasions. It was no longer possible to define a Sikh simply as one who followed the Gurū, and although the doctrines of *Gurū Panth* (the corporate community as Gurū) and *Gurū Granth* (the scripture as Gurū) successively emerged neither was sufficient to meet eighteenth-century needs. These needs were largely met by recourse to distinctively Jaṭ patterns and to institutions which explicitly distinguished the Sikh from the Muslim. Gradually there evolved and crystallized the distinctive Khālsā *rahit*, or Khālsā 'Code of Discipline', with its insistence upon such features as the obligatory symbols termed the *pañj kakke* or 'Five K's'.

This code provided a new and different answer to the old question of what is a Sikh. A Sikh is one who accepts baptism into the Khālsā and promises to abide by its discipline. Features of the discipline which commanded a particular importance were the Jaṭ custom of leaving hair uncut, and the anti-Muslim prohibition of tobacco and *halāl* meat. Other institutions which supplemented the code and served to strengthen the community's cohesion were regular assemblies in the cult centre (the *dharamsālā* which later became the *gurduārā*), a pronounced reverence for the sacred scriptures, and a new historiography which devoted primary attention to the perils and triumphs of the eighteenth century.

Meanwhile the janam-sākhīs gradually moved away from the position of central importance which they had previously held. Functional substitutes had become necessary and had been found. The janam-sākhīs were not stripped of their function entirely, but from the eighteenth century onwards they shared it with other elements, some of them far more efficient because they related with such greater intimacy to the transformed condition of the Sikh community. The retention of the janam-sākhīs actually involved some contradictions, for the janam-sākhī traditions are much different in tone and intention from the ideals and institutions erected by eighteenth-century experience. Their intention is, however, entirely understandable. A sanctity and an affection still adhere to them and their narrative power provides an anchor of considerable strength. If it be claimed that they will eventually decline to a status which interests only the occasional historian or student of literature, assuredly that day has not yet come.

14

THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS AS
HISTORICAL SOURCES

Lives of Baba Nanuk called 'Junum Sakhis' are very common, but
they are so full of fable and invention, displaying such intense
ignorance, that they are more calculated to deceive than instruct.
> R. N. Cust, *The Life of Baba Nanuk, the Founder of the Sikh
> Sect of the Hindu Religion in the Punjab.*

CUST's brief account of Gurū Nānak was published in 1859.[1] Eighteen
years later Ernst Trumpp repeated, in language of similar disdain and
condescension, the same opinion of the janam-sākhīs.[2] Conventions have
long since changed, and because their style now sounds highly insulting
those who still accept their derogatory interpretation usually demonstrate a
much greater degree of sensitivity in their choice of words. Against this
extreme view can be set its more popular opposite, the attitude which
persists in treating the janam-sākhīs as generally trustworthy and accurate.
Only minor changes are permitted by this popular interpretation. The more
marvellous of the wonder-stories are commonly rationalized or removed,
details which impose an undue strain upon the reader's credulity are
similarly discarded, and the substantial balance is then accepted as
historically reliable. Both extremes claim to be assessments of the janam-
sākhīs as historical sources. Variously modified they represent every
possible theory from total acceptance to total rejection.

Of the two interpretations the acceptance theory has, understandably,
been much the more popular, and books relating the life and travels of
Gurū Nānak are now legion. Ever since Macauliffe published the first
volume of *The Sikh Religion* studies of the same kind have continued to
appear, most of them in Pañjābī but several in English and other languages.
Up to 1969 this succession of biographies could be more appropriately
described as a trickle rather than as a stream. In that year, however, the
trickle suddenly enlarged and briefly became a flood. The quincentenary of
the Gurū's birth created an unprecedented demand and, as in the case of
the Gurū Gobind Siṅgh tercentenary three years earlier, the demand
produced a vigorous response.

Inevitably the authors who attempted biographies of Gurū Nānak were
compelled to rely almost exclusively upon the janam-sākhīs for their
material, and for those who purposed to write lengthy accounts of his life
this reliance had to be generally uncritical. This has been the standard

[1] The essay was published in Lahore as 'a pamphlet for use in schools'.
[2] E. Trumpp, *The Ādi Granth* (London, 1877), p. *i*.

method from the time of Macauliffe onwards, and in so far as the janam-sākhīs have been used as historical source-material their usage has been almost exclusively limited to this biographical concern. Although this dependence upon the janam-sākhīs is inescapable two major qualifications are vital. The first is that the janam-sākhīs can tell us very little about the historical Nānak, of the man who lived in the Pañjāb during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Although the investigation of his actual life must still rely largely upon the janam-sākhīs the source is for this purpose a very unreliable one and its yield necessarily scant.

The second qualification is that whereas the janam-sākhīs tell us relatively little of the historical Nānak they do communicate much concerning the later myth of Nānak and of its importance within the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century community of his followers. They also tell us much of the wider life of that community and of the Pañjāb in which it lived during that later period. It is most important that this potential contribution should be appreciated. For too long the use of the janam-sākhīs as historical sources has been confined to biographical endeavours, an approach which assumes that the janam-sākhī narratives relate primarily to the times of Nānak. It is to their own times, and particularly to the seventeenth century, that they primarily relate, and it is for this later period that they can make a major contribution to historical understanding.

1. THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS AS SOURCES FOR THE LIFE OF GURŪ NĀNAK

This issue may be treated very briefly, partly for the reason given above and partly because it is more extensively discussed elsewhere.[1] The procedure which must be followed in any attempt to use the janam-sākhīs as biographical sources should consist of a patient analysis of the anecdotes and discourses directed to the identification of elements which may safely be traced to the historical Nānak or his immediate environment. This amounts in practice to a lengthy series of tests, and for these tests a set of basic criteria must be devised.

One criterion to which constant appeal must be made is the evidence of external sources. This is an obvious procedure, but one which must be used with caution. References to Nānak which occur in other sources require careful checking, and if upon analysis they leave room for serious doubt this element of doubt should not be glossed over. There is, for example, a reference to the Gurū in the *Chaitanya Bhāgavat* which has been taken as conclusive proof of a meeting between Nānak and Chaitanya.[2] Such a meeting is certainly a possibility, but the reference does not provide sufficiently convincing evidence to permit any categorical affirmation. One must also take account of the age of the *Chaitanya Bhāgavat*, which, according to Bimanbehari Majumdar, 'could not have been written before the seventeenth century'.[3] Anecdotes concerning Nānak quickly became a

[1] *GNSR*, pp. 68–147. See esp. pp. 68–70.
[2] *SLTGN(Eng)*, p. 336.   [3] Ibid., p. 335.

feature of North Indian bhakti hagiography (as the works of Mahipati indicate) and traditions concerning Bābā Nānak had certainly reached Bengal by the seventeenth century. It could be argued that just as Nānak had to be represented as meeting Kabīr, so in like manner did Chaitanya have to encounter Nānak. Although it cannot be asserted that such a meeting did *not* take place, nor can it be affirmed that its historicity has been established.

The same caution must also be applied to the traditions concerning Nānak's visits to Sri Lanka and Bāghdād,[1] and likewise to the numerous conclusions based upon phonetic similarities or popular etymologies. The 'Land of Āsā' has in this manner been identified with Āssām; the 'Land of Dhanāsarī' is similarly identified with the valley of the Dhansiri river in the same province; *Munāfik Deś*, the 'Land of Unbelievers', is treated as a version of Kāfirstān in the Hindu Kush; and a visit to China has been declared proven on the grounds that the city of Nanking must have been named in memory of the Gurū.

In practice the appeal to external sources rarely sustains a janam-sākhī tradition. It is the reverse which is true, namely that such an appeal will commonly enable the historian to set particular claims aside. Whereas contemporary references to Nānak appear to be non-existent there is abundant evidence to indicate that many of the anecdotes or details attached to his person by janam-sākhī narrators were present in earlier traditions. External sources may not help much in confirming janam-sākhī claims, but they do render much assistance in distinguishing features which relate to the later image of Nānak rather than to the authentic historical person.

Most of the other criteria serve a similar purpose, their contribution being in terms of rejection rather than affirmation. The result, inevitably, is the conclusion that although much can be known concerning the teachings of Nānak very little can be positively affirmed concerning his life. Many incidents must remain unproven either way, but given the general unreliability of the janam-sākhīs as testimony to the historical Nānak the historian must usually incline strongly towards scepticism.

Three considerations will however mitigate any sense of disappointment which this conclusion may cause. The first is that the analysis does at least confirm the broad outline of his life in the Pañjāb. The second is that his works have been preserved and that from this source all aspects of his teachings may be known. The third is that for the historian the later image and its impact upon the later community will be of even greater interest than the historical figure. This image the janam-sākhīs describe in superabundant detail.

2. THE JANAM-SĀKHĪ IMAGE OF BĀBĀ NĀNAK

For the janam-sākhī narrators Bābā Nānak was above all else the Giver of Salvation. Although there is no single word to express this status explicitly,

[1] See above, p. 162. *GNSR*, pp. 125–32.

the promise of salvation (*mukti*) is repeatedly held out to those who will own Nānak as their Master and Guide. The single-word descriptions which do recur in the janam-sākhī narratives serve rather to express particular aspects of his saviour status. In all instances they are drawn from earlier usage, but there can be no gainsaying the uniqueness of the figure which emerges through the multitude of the janam-sākhī anecdotes. This figure, a blend of traditional symbols with surviving memories of the authentic personality, constitutes the janam-sākhī image of Nānak.

Although there is a generalized image common to all janam-sākhī traditions there are also a few features which are characteristic of particular sources. One of these, the image of Nānak the Ascetic, is of sufficient importance to warrant separate notice. The image depicts Nānak as one who consorted with celibate *langoṭ-band* sādhūs, lived by begging, practised *tapasya*, and sought withdrawal from the world in his quest for salvation. This particular representation is plainly the creation of the continuing ascetic tradition within the Sikh community and, as one would expect, its distinctive features find their fullest expression in the *Narrative IIb* source.[1] Their incidence is not, however, limited to this source. The ascetic ideal, though obviously stressed by a particular sect, exercised a wide appeal throughout the entire community, and occasional references to the Great Ascetic image are to be found amongst descriptions of a more conventional kind. One which begins in the *Narrative IIb* tradition but spreads much further is the belief that Nānak subsisted for many years on a daily *ak* pod and handful of sand, and that he made his bed upon stones.[2] In some references his diet is limited to either the *ak* pod[3] or the sand,[4] and elsewhere it is reduced to the consumption of air.[5]

Nānak the Ascetic is not, however, the dominant image of most janam-sākhī traditions. The *Miharbān* commentators do betray a certain fascination for an ascetic interpretation of the person and mission of Nānak, but their normal preference is for the image projected by almost all the narrative traditions. This generally consistent image also draws extensively upon traditional models, but not the same models as those of the dissenting *Narrative IIb* source. Various features may be identified and scrutinized separately.

Several of these features may be treated as aspects of piety, a quality which is represented throughout the janam-sākhīs by the regular title of Bābā. Whereas Nānak is now almost invariably called Gurū Nānak the janam-sākhīs with equal consistency refer to him as Bābā Nānak. 'Gurū' is certainly used and where it appears there is generally an evident stress upon Nānak's status as the Supreme Teacher.[6] It is, however, relatively

---

[1] See above, p. 203. For examples see esp. *B40*, ff. 76a, 102b.
[2] *B40*, ff. 76a, 103b. *AS*, p. 23. *Mih JS* I.111. *BG* I:24.
[3] *B40*, f. 180a.   [4] *Pur JS*, p. 78. *AS*, p. 79.   [5] *Pur JS*, pp. 25, 89.
[6] Cf. *B40*, ff. 125a, 126b. The *Narrative IIb* tradition represents Nānak's travels as a quest for a gurū, implying thereby Nānak's willingness to accept the role of disciple. *B40*, f. 76b. It does, however, suggest that this was unnecessary, for later in the same sākhī a multitude of people at the Gangā acclaim him as their gurū. *B40*, f. 79b. Aṅgad, Rām Dās, and Arjan all refer to him as Gurū Nānak. *AG*, pp. 150, 710, 1297. The more exalted forms Satgurū and Gurūdev are occasionally used by janam-sākhī compilers.

uncommon in the earlier traditions and at no stage in the development of
the janam-sākhīs does it overtake 'Bābā' in popularity. The fact that 'Gurū'
was used so infrequently during the early period presumably reflects the
standard convention of the period and the tradition. Modern usage can
easily suggest that the title possesses an immemorial sanction. This was
certainly not the case within the territory occupied by the early Sant
tradition, nor by other movements with related beliefs and attitudes. If in
fact Gorakhnāth was characteristically known as Gurū Gorakhnāth during
the pre-Nānak period he must be regarded as something of an exception.
The title was not commonly used in this sense and it should therefore come
as no surprise to discover that the janam-sākhīs use it so sparingly.

The early use of 'Gurū' as a title applied to Nānak may also have been
inhibited by an awareness of the meaning which Nānak himself had so
explicitly attached to it. For Nānak the only *gurū* was the inner voice of
God. Although the shift from actual voice to human mediator is a com-
paratively simple one, the stress laid by Nānak on his own understanding
of the term is a clear one and may well have served to retard any such
process. It is even possible that the ascription of praise, *vāh gurū* ('Praise
to the Gurū'), and the practice of chanting *gurū gurū*, both of which were
to become standard usages in the later seventeenth century, may have
originally possessed the same meaning as Nānak intended. There is, of
course, no doubt that in their later standard usage they refer to Nānak
himself.[1]

Within the janam-sākhīs, however, 'Bābā' is strongly dominant. The
honorific *bābā* (literally father, grandfather, old man) evidently goes back
to the earliest disciples who attached themselves to Nānak during his life-
time. This assumption is based not merely upon the common usage of the
term in the popular devotion of the period but also upon a reference which
Nānak himself has left. In his shabad *Gauṛi Cheti* 13 he indicates that
'Bābā Nānak' is what others call him.[2] The meaning which it bears is that
of respect based upon piety and religious wisdom. The later preference for
'Gurū' retains this sense, adding to it the dimension implied by the assimil-
ation of the divine inner voice to the human communicator. It could also
be urged that the increasingly specific application of *sikh* to the disciples of
Nānak would encourage the same development. Although the janam-
sākhīs sometimes use *sikh* in a general sense to designate the followers of
other leaders or teachers, the term eventually acquires the exclusive Nānak-
panthī meaning which it retains to this day. A *sikh* is necessarily the fol-
lower of a preceptor and although, as we have just noted, *gurū* had not
conventionally been attached to a preceptor's name as an actual title of
address it was nevertheless an appropriate one.

Increasingly, therefore, the preference shifted away from 'Bābā' to

---

[1] Cf. the final sentence of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* (loc. cit., f. 231a). Later still the two words *vāh*
and *gurū* coalesced to form a name of God ('Vāhgurū', generally translated nowadays as 'Wonderful
Lord'). See *B40(Eng)*, p. 45n.

[2] *AG*, p. 155. See Vīr Singh, art., 'Srī Gurū Nānak Dev Jī dī janam sākhī Srī Gurū Granth
Sāhib Jī vichon saṅkalat', in the *Khālsā Samāchār*, vol. lxx, no. 1, p. 6.

'Gurū'. This, however, carries us beyond the janam-sākhīs. In so far as we can detect the beginnings of this gradual shift of preference operating within them there is little trace of any significant change in the image. Bābā Nānak, Gurū Nānak, and Srī Gurū Bābā Nānak are all expressions of essentially the same impulse and interpretation. The marked preference of the janam-sākhī narrators for the first of these affirms the piety and spiritual wisdom of the Master without denying those features subtly evoked by the later title. Although they opt so strongly for Bābā there can be no questioning their acceptance of Nānak as the mediator of a divine message, nor their own status as his disciples.

A conventional understanding of piety is also implied in the terms *bhagat*,[1] *sādh* (or *sādhū*),[2] and *faqīr*,[3] all of which are applied to Nānak by various janam-sākhī narrators. In referring to him as a *faqīr* they were not implying that he was to be regarded as a Sūfī. (On the rare occasions when they wish to attribute distinctively Muslim qualities they call him a *pīr*.) The word *faqīr* had been completely assimilated to popular Hindu usage as a synonym for *sādhū*, and both were commonly used as terms of respect due to those who had attained to spiritual wisdom and freedom from worldly desires. The same variety of assimilation is also evident in the *Purātan* affection for the Sūfī title *darveś* (dervish).[4] All four terms express the traditional form of piety which constitutes such a significant part of the janam-sākhī image.

Mere piety was not, however, the sum total of the janam-sākhī image. Bābā Nānak was a *baḍā bhagat* and a *bhallā faqīr*, and he was also much more. Others could be true sādhūs, but Nānak was unique. This uniqueness is represented by a number of characteristic terms which may be taken in ascending order of eminence.

He was, first, a *mahā-purukh* or 'Exalted One'. Rājā Śivanābh, in devising a method of recognizing Bābā Nānak, instructs his slave-girls to approach all sādhūs who visit his domain. Nānak when he first arrives is identified merely as another faqīr, but when he successfully resists the temptations proffered by Śivanābh's slave-girls he is declared to be a *mahā-purukh*.[5] Although uniqueness is implied it is not yet specifically stated. The term is particularly common in *Narrative III* material, but is by no means confined to it.

Secondly, Nānak is declared to be an *avatār*, a divine incarnation sent for the salvation of men. He is, in fact, said to be a reincarnation of Rājā Janak (presumably the first Janak, although this is not made absolutely clear).[6] For some obscure reason Rājā Janak held a curious fascination for the early Sikh community. A reference by Kīrat the Bard included in the Ādi Granth identifies Nānak with Janak;[7] the author of the *Dabistān-i-Mazāhib* was sufficiently impressed by the same popular belief to note it

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 86a, 94a.   [2] *B40*, f. 192b.   [3] *B40*, ff. 20b, 71a, 146a.
[4] *Pur JS*, pp. 22–3, 24, 40, 63.   [5] *B40*, ff. 144b, 146a, 149b.
[6] This identification with the first Janak is implied in a reference to 'Janak Videha' which occurs in the *B40* sākhī entitled 'A Discourse with Kabīr'. *B40*, f. 137b.
[7] *Savāie mahale dūje ke* (3), *AG*, p. 1391.

in his account of the Sikhs;[1] and references to it appear at various places in the janam-sākhīs.[2]

The status of a divine *avatār* is high, but there is one higher still. The supreme status is that of God Himself and the climax of the janam-sākhī elevation of Nānak is the declaration that he is actually God. He is not merely one *avatār* amongst the small number of divine incarnations, nor even the most exalted of this tiny élite. The position which the janam-sākhīs finally reach is that Bābā Nānak must be identified with God, a unique and perfect manifestation of the Timeless One. 'Thou art the reader of inward thoughts,' confesses Rājā Śivanābh, and he continues, 'Thou art the supreme God!'[3] Many other references point to the same exalted status, and in a late addition to the *Ādi Sākhīs* the claim is stated in words which leave no room for doubt.

> The Gurū is God (*paramesar*). Whatever he does is true and whatever he says is true. The Gurū is God, not a man.[4]

The context makes it absolutely clear that the reference is to Gurū Nānak.[5] From his own works it is abundantly evident that Nānak himself could never have contemplated any such claim to divinity, but given the janam-sākhī doctrine of salvation his apotheosis is but a natural outcome.

All janam-sākhī narrators do not press their convictions to this logical conclusion, but with only one exception all unite in according Bābā Nānak a divine status far above that attained by any other incarnation of the divine. The one exception is the inimical Hindālī tradition appearing in the earliest *Bālā* janam-sākhīs. This claims a threefold succession from Kabīr, through Nānak, to a climax in Bābā Hindāl, seeking thereby to demonstrate the supremacy of Hindāl over both his predecessors.[6] Elsewhere the image is generally consistent and differs only in the degree of divinity attributed to Nānak. For the Sikh community of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Bābā Nānak was, in progressively ascending degrees of exaltation, a manifestation of God. Thus were the soteriological claims authenticated.

This image had to be set within a Pañjāb context. Inevitably this meant a confrontation with the conflicting claims of Hindu and Muslim doctrines of religious authority and salvation. For Nānak himself the conflict of claims was ultimately irrelevant for neither 'knew the mystery'.[7] Salvation could be obtained only by ignoring both and instead seeking direct access to God through the immanent Word.

The janam-sākhīs are by no means unfaithful to this vision, and the

---

[1] *PPP* I.I (April 1967), pp. 55–6. *SLTGN(Eng)*, p. 50.
[2] *Mih JS* I.1–9. *AS*, p. 3. For *Purātan* references see *PHLS* i. 341 and ii. 230. For a *Gyān-ratanāvalī* reference see *PHLS* ii. 241.
[3] *pārabraham paramesar*. *B40*, f. 152a.   [4] *AS*, p. 91.
[5] *AS*, p. 97. For other examples in the *B40 Janam-sākhī* see ff. 79b, 85a, 140a, 140b, 162a, 188a–b, 205a, 217b, 229b.
[6] *B41*, f. 166b. BL MS Or. 2754. I, f. 162a–b.
[7] *Mārū Solahā* 2(6), *AG*, p. 1021. *GNSR*, p. 161.

most famous of all their pronouncements on the subject can be interpreted in a sense which would accord closely with Nānak's own intention.

nā koī hindū hai nā koī musalmān.[1]

There is neither Hindu nor Muslim.

There is, however, a distinctive difference to be noted between Nānak's own utterances and the janam-sākhī treatment of the issue. For Nānak the message alone was sufficient and his emphasis is strongly upon its positive aspects; criticisms of contemporary belief and practice are certainly present in his works, but they are strictly subordinate to his repeated insistence upon the divine Name as the vehicle of salvation. When he does pass strictures they are commonly aimed at Nāth yogīs. Muslims and Islamic doctrine receive much less attention.

The situation of the janam-sākhī narrators was, however, different. The growth of the Sikh Panth involved a growing measure of opposition, and this in turn involved the Panth in polemic. If the community was to sustain distinctive claims it could do so only by transgressing limits set by other communities. Increasingly this polemic came to mean rivalry between Nānak-panthīs and Muslims, and inevitably this later rivalry was reflected in the janam-sākhī reconstruction of the Guru's own life and times.

As a result of this situation two allied themes run through the janam-sākhīs, both of them making substantial contributions to the janam-sākhī image of Nānak. The first is that of Nānak the Unifier, the one to whom both Hindu and Muslim must owe allegiance. This theme emerges in the opening sākhī with a united welcome accorded to the infant Nānak[2] and it receives a corresponding prominence at the very end when Hindus and Muslims quarrel over the disposal of Nānak's corpse.[3] Between these two events Bābā Nānak is pointedly called a Hindu,[4] but with equal emphasis he is described as one who mixed Hindu and Muslim garments and customs in such a manner that his precise affiliation was a puzzle to those for whom all men must belong to one religion or the other.[5] As a result crowds of both Hindus and Muslims flocked to him.[6] The theme also finds a later expression in the constant presence of two disciples, the Muslim Mardānā and the Hindu Bālā.

The second theme marked a stronger response to the contemporary situation. The principal challenge to the Panth came from Muslim claims and these claims had to be answered. The result was a 'Triumph over Islam' theme. This finds expression in Bābā Nānak's celebrated discourse with Daulat Khān's qāzī;[7] in missionary visits to Mecca, Medīnā, Bāghdād, and Multān; and in successful encounters with celebrated Sūfī pīrs.

The 'Triumph over Islam' theme is well illustrated by the *Bālā* sākhī

---

[1] *B40*, f. 19b.
[2] *B40*, f. 1b. *Pur JS*, p. 1. *GNSR*, pp. 36, 51–2.
[3] *Pur JS*, p. 114. *B40*, f. 228b. *GNSR*, pp. 50–1.
[4] *B40*, ff. 77a, 133a.   [5] *B40*, f. 74a, 100a. *Pur JS*, pp. 25, 98.
[6] *B40*, f. 104a.   [7] *B40*, ff. 22b–23b.

entitled 'How the Gurūjī met Mālo Takhān'.[1] This anecdote relates how Sheikh Mālo, a resident of Pakho or somewhere near it, heard that a Hindu called Nānak was showing respect to none of the traditional teachings of Islam. Filled with anger he came to Nānak but was promptly converted by the recitation of two shabads.

> Sheikh Mālo prostrated himself before Gurū Nānākjī and laid his head upon his feet. 'Gurūjī,' he declared, 'you are my pīr and I am your murīd. Grant me even greater spiritual satisfaction. The Hindus make one claim and the Muslims another. Both are false. Whatever you say is true!'[2]

In such declarations the Hindu claims are commonly bracketed with Muslim so that both may suffer a common condemnation. It is, however, usually a Muslim who has to suffer the dialectical defeat and make the confession. Apart from the Nāths (who are treated separately) there are relatively few controversies involving representatives of Hindu society. When they do occur they normally involve obvious targets such as the overly scrupulous Brāhmaṇ or the miserly money-lender. The Nāth encounters should be noted as a third theme, one which plainly accorded rather more closely with Nānak's own attitudes.[3]

Of these three themes only the first commands a notable following today. Once again the pressure of contemporary circumstances is dictating the choice of material and the image which emerges in consequence. Whereas the Nāth conflict, so significant for Nānak himself, is now largely forgotten, the Muslim–Hindu unity theme answers a contemporary yearning and so receives a powerful emphasis in all modern representations of the Nānak image. This is well illustrated by the frequency with which a particular eighteenth-century couplet is quoted today.

> *bābā nānak shāh faqīr*
> *hindū dā gurū musalmān dā pīr*
> Bābā Nānak, the supreme Faqīr!
> The Hindu's Gurū and the Muslim's Pīr.[4]

The image is never static. There are, however, definable images for particular periods, and it is the image of the seventeenth-century Sikh community which the janam-sākhīs project.

3. THE SIKH COMMUNITY IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

It has frequently been observed how in terms of historical source-material the value of the *Jātaka* and *Hadīth* literature largely concerns periods later

---

[1] *Bālā JS*, pp. 338–41. Takhāṇ = Tarkhān, the carpenter caste.
[2] Ibid., p. 340. The same message is repeated in the three succeeding sākhīs, relating discourses with Ubārā Khān Paṭhān and Abdul Rahmān. Ibid., pp. 341–9.
[3] See above, pp. 144–57.
[4] Cf. Rattan Singh Bhaṅgū, *Prāchīn Panth Prakāś* (Amritsar, 1962), p. 30. The *Prāchīn Panth Prakāś* was written in A.D. 1841.

than those which the literature purports to describe. The *Hadith* may be closer to Muhammad than the *Jātaka* stories are to Gautama, but the principle remains the same. As historical source-material they must be related primarily, and indeed almost exclusively, to the later periods which produced them. The same principle must be applied to the janam-sākhīs. The historical record which they provide is a record not of the early sixteenth-century period of Gurū Nānak but of the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century situation of the Sikh community within which the janam-sākhī traditions evolved.

The image of Nānak projected by the janam-sākhīs is by no means the only feature to emerge with clarity from this record. Because the narrators were describing a person and not a set of doctrines it was essential that they should provide a setting within which the Gurū's activities might take place. Inevitably they drew the form and details of this setting from their own contemporary experience, and it is accordingly to the post-Nānak period that the janam-sākhī social patterns must be related. When for example the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* provides a lengthy account of Nānak's wedding the description of this event must be applied not to the conventions of the late fifteenth century but to those of the early or middle seventeenth century.[1] The sole detail which can be related to the historical Nānak is the brief statement that at some indeterminate age he was married in Baṭālā to the daughter of Mūlā, a Choṇā Khatrī. The remainder concerns the later period. If it be protested that marriage customs in the Pañjāb change slowly and that a seventeenth-century description could still correspond closely to a fifteenth-century event the reply must be that this is no more than an assumption, and that it could be a very misleading one. It is to the seventeenth century that the detailed description applies, and it is accordingly as a source for seventeenth-century marriage procedures that the janam-sākhī must be used.

The same principle also applies to the janam-sākhī descriptions of Nānak's funeral,[2] and to other less formalized customs. In the case of the *B40* funeral rites it is interesting to observe the continuing authority of brāhmanical traditions.[3] These orthodox conventions may have been practised by the early followers who disposed of Nānak's body, but we cannot be sure. What we can assume with some assurance is that such customs must have been general within the Sikh community during the late seventeenth century.[4]

The general background against which the janam-sākhīs set their tales of Bābā Nānak is unmistakably that of rural Pañjāb, and it is clear from their descriptions that the Sikh Panth of this period must have been almost exclusively a rural community. This impression is in no way disturbed by the prominence given to Khatrīs in the janam-sākhī narratives. Although the Khatrīs constitute an urban-based caste grouping they are by no means

[1] *Mih JS* I.29–37.   [2] *B40*, ff. 222a–230a *passim*.
[3] *B40*, ff. 226a, 228a, 229b–230a.
[4] The source which in 1733 provided the *B40* compiler with material for his funeral sākhī was in existence more than thirty years earlier when the *Ādi Sākhīs* collection was compiled.

exclusively urban, and when the janam-sākhīs so commonly place their Khatrīs in rural contexts it must follow that most of the Sikh Khatrīs of the janam-sākhī period were in fact rural dwellers. Nānak himself had been a village Khatrī, and one popular anecdote has as its setting a village of Uppal Khatrīs.[1]

The rural base of the community is clearly implied by the absence of knowledgeable references to urban life, and by a corresponding abundance of authentic village descriptions. Lahore is occasionally mentioned, but there is no indication that any of the narrators have a distinct notion of its size or way of life. For the narrator who first related the story of the Lahore merchant converted on his way to Kartārpur the city was evidently envisaged in terms more appropriate to a large village.[2] The same applies to Sultānpur and other towns.

This rural consciousness is also to be detected in anecdotes which purport to have occurred outside the Pañjāb. When Nānak visits the Land of Unbelievers the locality is variously described as *vilāit* or *deś*, both of which imply areas at least as large as a modern district.[3] Elsewhere in the same sākhī, however, the reference is simply to a *nagarī* (small town or village),[4] a *piṇḍ girāu* (village),[5] or a *vasadī* (cluster of dwellings).[6] The narrator's description of the area plainly indicates that the diminutive terms correspond to his own understanding, and that this understanding is of a distinctively Pañjābī variety. From his narrative it soon becomes clear that *Munāfik Deś*, the Land of Unbelievers, consists of a single small town or village surrounded by its cultivated land. The situation which it reflects is that of the *bār* dweller, living in an interfluvial tract where streams are too far distant for irrigation and where well irrigation is exceedingly difficult or impossible.

To this instance many other rural references could be added. The anecdote entitled 'The Ruined Crop Restored' bears all the marks of an authentic village experience[7] and so too does the celebrated story of how Bābā Nānak directed the well-dressed Lahaṇā to carry dripping grass on his head.[8] The same sort of background is also evident in the account of how Nānak sent his servant Kamālā to cut grass for his horses and buffaloes from the village wasteland (*belā*).[9] These tales are products of rural Pañjāb, and the community which produced them was obviously reflecting its own situation. At certain points this is stated directly. When Bābā Nānak sets his Sikhs to work it is, inevitably, agriculture which he chooses.[10]

Within the general context of rural Pañjāb the janam-sākhīs indicate three social groups as primary constituents of the seventeenth-century Sikh community. The most prominent is the Khatrī caste grouping. From other sources it is well known that the ten Sikh Gurūs were all Khatrīs. The janam-sākhīs indicate that Khatrī influence in the Panth was not limited to the authority of the incumbent Gurū, but that it extended much

---

[1] *B40*, f. 28b. *Pur JS*, p. 20.   [2] *B40*, ff. 138b, 140b.   [3] *B40*, ff. 128a, 128b.
[4] *B40*, ff. 129b, 132b.   [5] *B40*, f. 131b.   [6] *B40*, ff. 128b, 131a.
[7] *B40*, ff. 7a–8a.   [8] *B40*, ff. 97b–98b.   [9] *B40*, ff. 221a–222a.
[10] *B40*, ff. 108a–109a.

further within the community. The three principal figures in the story of the Lahore merchant are all Khatrīs;[1] Dūnī Chand with his seven pennants is said to be a Khatrī;[2] in the *Purātan* account it is a Khatrī who converts Lahaṇā in Khaḍūr;[3] and the *B40* manuscript was actually written by a Khatrī.[4] In several instances their sub-castes are also given.[5] They are not always the heroes of janam-sākhī anecdotes (Mūlā and Malak Bhāgo are both said to be Khatrīs), but of their prominence in the janam-sākhīs there can be no doubt and this prominence must reflect substantial influence within the seventeenth-century community.

The Jaṭs, in contrast, receive much less attention than one might expect from their eighteenth-century and subsequent predominance in the community. Eighteenth-century developments indicate that their numbers must certainly have been substantial during the earlier period, and a direct reference by the author of the *Dabistān-i-Mazāhib*, recorded during the first half of the seventeenth century, confirms their importance within the community during that period.[6] The janam-sākhīs suggest nevertheless that their influence within the Panth must have been less than that of the Khatrīs, at least within those areas of Sikh life which interested their narrators and compilers. Perhaps the likeliest explanation is that whereas the Jaṭ Sikhs were prominent numerically, and also in communal administration and military activity, the Khatrīs retained their status as religious leaders. During the eighteenth century the Jaṭs rose to prominence through the *jathās* and the *misls* (both military organizations), whereas the Khatrīs retained their hold on the religious *saṅgats* where these were not transformed into military groups.

It should, moreover, be observed that although references are not as numerous as one might expect Jaṭs do nevertheless constitute a second prominent caste grouping within the janam-sākhīs, and with the advent of Bālā Sandhū their importance increases. A Randhāvā Jaṭ named Jittā, or Ajittā, is one of the most prominent of all disciples;[7] the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī* provides two Jaṭs as companions of the Gurū during his second *Purātan* journey;[8] and the *Bālā* tradition introduces another Randhāvā, this one bearing the name Buṛā or Buḍhā.[9] The *B40 Janam-sākhī* also refers to a single Gujar disciple.[10]

The third group consists of a number of artisan castes. Artisan Sikhs (the self-styled Rāmgaṛhiās) constitute an important segment of the community today and it is evident from the janam-sākhīs that their allegiance

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 138b ff.   [2] *Pur JS*, p. 70.   [3] *Pur JS*, p. 106.
[4] See below, p. 264. The *Bālā* janam-sākhīs also name a Khatrī as copyist. *Bālā JS*, p. 1. See above, p. 16.
[5] Bhagīrath is an Aṇad Khatrī, Dūnī Chand is a Dhuppaṛ, and the Khaḍūr Sikh a Bhallā. The *B40 Janam-sākhī* names a Bhaṇḍārī disciple (*B40*, f. 184a) and the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* mentions a Ghei (*Pur JS*, p. 79). Nānak, himself a Bedī, married the daughter of a Choṇā (*B40*, ff. 1a, 6a). Bhāī Gurdās, a Bhallā, refers to several more Khatrīs in a list of disciples notable for its strong predominance of Khatrī names (*BG* XI:13–14).
[6] *PPP* I.1 (April 1967), p. 57.   [7] *BG* XI:14. *B40*, ff. 111a, 177a, 181a.
[8] *Pur JS*, p. 79.   [9] *Bālā JS*, p. 335. *BG* XI:14. *MK*, p. 662.
[10] *B40*, f. 184a.

must date from at least the seventeenth century. Carpenters (*tarkhān*) are the most prominent.[1] Others named by the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs are a Kalāl (brewer), a Lohār (blacksmith), and a Chhīmbā (calico printer).[2] Ālam Chand, the illustrator of the *B40* manuscript, was a Rāj (mason) by caste.[3]

These three rural groups evidently constituted the bulk of the seventeenth-century community. Brāhmaṇs are almost completely absent except as convenient functionaries or as targets for some of the anecdotes. Out-caste groups are also conspicuously absent. The nearest approach to out-caste representation is Mardānā the Ḍūm. He, however, stands alone. There is no evidence to suggest that members of his caste entered the community in any numbers.

A constituency comprising three distinct caste groups inevitably raised the question of how the Sikh community should be defined. In theory a common allegiance to Nānak's message of salvation through the divine Name should have been sufficient, but in practice no community will tolerate such a slender base. The message of mystical union through *nām simaran* could sustain its appeal amongst a religious élite but it could not hold together the heterogeneous group which constituted the seventeenth-century Sikh community. Villagers who subscribed to the Panth because of simple piety, sub-caste solidarity, or a desire for social advancement needed objective conventions, and for their descendants born into the faith the need was even greater.

The janam-sākhīs reveal something of this struggle for identity, and of the tensions which it involved. There was, on the one hand, an evident awareness of links with the Hindu society from which the vast majority of Sikhs had come, and to which many still felt that they belonged. Without this continuing link it would have been impossible for the janam-sākhī narrators to have Nānak declare 'I am a Hindu'. On the other hand, there was a strong if ill-defined sense of difference and distinction from Hindu society. The nearest the janam-sākhīs come to defining this distinction is a pronouncement included in God's instructions to Nānak.

Go, Nānak. Your panth will flourish. The salutation of your followers shall be: *pairi pavaṇā satigurū hoiā*. The salutation of the Vaiṣṇava panth is: *rām kriṣṇa*. The salutation of the Sanyāsī panth is: *namo nārāyan*. The yogīs' salutation is: *ādeś ādi purukh kau*. The Muslims' cry is: *salām-'alaik*. You are Nānak and your panth will flourish. Your followers shall be called Nānak-panthīs and their salutation shall be: *pairi pavaṇā satigurū hoiā*.

I shall bless your panth. Inculcate devotion towards Me and strengthen men's obedience to their *dharma*. As the Vaiṣṇavas have their place of worship, the yogīs their āsan, and the Muslims their mosque, so your followers shall have

---

[1] *B40*, f. 182b. Pur *JS*, pp. 45, 90. *Bālā JS*, p. 87. Tarkhān Sikhs are generally called Rām-garhīā Sikhs. The name was assumed by the famous *misl* leader Jassā Singh of Ichogal following his capture of the Amritsar fort Rāmgaṛh in 1748. Jassā Singh was himself a Tarkhān and the name which he had adopted (or which had been bestowed on him) was subsequently assumed by all other Sikhs of the Tarkhān caste. The title is also applied, in a more general sense, to Sikhs of other artisan castes.

[2] Pur *JS*, pp. 65, 90.   [3] *B40*, f. 84b.

their dharamsālā. Three things you must inculcate in your panth: repeating the divine Name, giving charity, and regular bathing. Keep yourself unspotted while yet remaining in the condition of a householder.[1]

The stress which this passage lays upon a separate cult centre is confirmed by the numerous janam-sākhī references to Sikh dharamsālās. This term, which now designates a rest-house attached to a temple, clearly means in seventeenth-century Sikh parlance a room or building in which local groups would meet for communal singing (*kīrtan*). Repeated references are made to the dharamsālā, particularly in *Narrative III* material, and it is clear that these buildings provided a distinctively Sikh cult centre. Within these dharamsālās there would be regular conventicles, meetings of the *saṅgat* or *satsaṅg* at which the songs of the Gurūs would be sung. There was nothing either original or unique in this practice, for the *satsaṅg* had long been a feature of the bhakti tradition and during the janam-sākhī period it flourished in other parts of Northern India.[2] Its significance lay not in any feature peculiar to Sikh practice but rather in the existence of distinctively Sikh (or Nānak-panthī) *saṅgats* meeting in separate Sikh dharamsālās. These conventicles were concentrated in rural Pañjāb but already Khatrī enterprise was founding *saṅgats* in places far beyond its borders.[3]

The word *gurduārā* (gurdwara) does not appear during this period. For the seventeenth-century community the standard term was *dharamsālā*. No hint of size, pretentiousness, or furnishings is ever given and it seems safe to assume that these buildings were usually humble structures, perhaps rooms which served other purposes when not being used for *kīrtan*. This is suggested by a reference to a new disciple converting his house into a dharamsālā.[4] Other references indicate that a portion of a house might be used as a dharamsālā.[5]

A glimpse of a *saṅgat* meeting for *kīrtan* in a dharamsālā is given in the *B40* sākhī 49b, a *Narrative III* description which probably relates to early eighteenth-century conditions.

Beneath the rājā's palace was the dharamsālā where the Sikhs sang hymns and performed *kīrtan*. Sitting there the rājā would fix his attention on the music of whatever hymn the Sikhs were singing. One day the rānī said to the rājā, 'Rājā, how is it that no children have been born in our house? Let us go to the dharamsālā and lay our petition before the congregation, for the Gurū is present in the congregation.'. . .
Next day the rājā and the rānī both joined the congregation. It was an *Ekādasi* gathering. There was a congregational festival and a large gathering was present.

[1] *B40*, f. 125b. Malcolm reproduces a version of this declaration in his *Sketch of the Sikhs*, erroneously attributing it to Bhāī Gurdās. *Asiatick Researches*, vol. xi (Calcutta, 1810), pp. 275–6. For another statement of Sikh distinctiveness see *Mih JS* II.411–14.

[2] F. R. Allchin, *Kavitāvalī* (London, 1964), p. 52.

[3] G. B. Singh, *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib diān Prāchīn Bīṛān* (Lahore, 1944), p. 323. There is also evidence pointing to the early establishment of *saṅgats* in South India by Bhāṭṛā Sikhs. W. H. McLeod, 'Hakīkat Rāh Mukām Rāje Śivanābh kī', in F. S. Bajwa (ed.), *Papers on Guru Nanak* (Proceedings of the Punjab History Conference, Fourth Session, Paṭiālā, 1969), pp. 96–7, 101–2.

[4] *B40*, f. 162b.   [5] *B40*, ff. 167b, 173a. *BG* I:27.

A hymn was being sung and all were sitting enthralled. The rājā and the rānī then presented their petition, saying, 'You are the assembly of the Gurū and whatever is sought from you is granted. May it please you to hear our intercession so that the Gurū may grant a son.'

Those who were present in the congregation offered a prayer in order that the rājā's faith might remain unshaken. Then they assured him, 'The Gurū Bābā will grant you a son.'[1]

The passage is of interest for the picture of the *sangat* which it presents and also for the doctrine which it so explicitly declares. For the narrator of the janam-sākhī (and presumably for many others) the Gurū was believed to be present in the *sangat*, and decisions of the *sangat* were regarded as pronouncements of the Gurū himself. The doctrine to which this clearly points is that of the *Gurū Panth*, the Khālsā belief that decisions of the Khālsā brotherhood expressed the intention of the Gurū.[2] At the conclusion of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* the same conviction is expressed with even greater clarity.

The other members of the congregation (*sangat*) constitute the court of the perfect Gurū. And the abode of the perfect Gurū is in your midst.[3]

It was presumably this doctrine of the Gurū's presence which suggested the change from *dharamsālā* to *gurduārā* (gurdwara). No mention is made of the presence of the Granth Sahib, nor of any special authority accorded it as a book. The later doctrine of the *Gurū Granth* is still no more than implicit in the reverence attached to the hymns sung in the dharamsālā.

The theory of the Gurū's presence in the *sangat* is a relatively late development in the janam-sākhīs. A much earlier and less sophisticated doctrine of the Gurū's presence can be observed in declarations concerning the merit of *darsan*, or 'audience' with the Gurū. This belief, like the custom of gathering for *kīrtan*, is distinctively Sikh only in so far as it normally limits the benefits of *darsan* to the presence of Bābā Nānak. Even this limitation is not invariably applied. The *B40* sākhī 51 explicitly attaches the merit to a meeting with anyone who qualifies as a genuine sādhū.[4] This is, however, unusual. In other instances the benefit is reserved for those who appear before the Gurū. For these fortunate people the results can be dramatic. A leper is instantly cleansed of his disease as a result of *darsan*.[5] Lahaṇā is instantly converted and takes his place as the Gurū's successor.[6] A scurvy sinner is saved from perdition because the smoke from his funeral pyre is seen from afar by the Gurū.[7] Even the miserly Mūlā obtains salvation because at the point of death he was granted *darsan*.[8]

Another concept which obviously held much meaning for the seven-

---

[1] *B40*, ff. 196b–197a. For another description see *B40*, f. 102b.
[2] W. H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 46–50.
[3] *B40*, f. 230b. Cf. also ff. 167b, 186a, 199a. All these examples come from the late *Narrative III* tradition.
[4] *B40*, ff. 203a–205a.   [5] *Pur JS*, p. 57.   [6] *B40*, f. 95a.
[7] *B40*, f. 192b. *Pur JS*, p. 32.   [8] *B40*, f. 101b.

teenth-century community was the merit of *sevā*, or 'service'. The content
of this word has undergone some interesting changes within the community
and its janam-sākhī meanings must be distinguished from later applica-
tions. In the janam-sākhīs it is sometimes used to designate worship or an
act of devotion. Ignorant worshippers of the sun are said to have been
performing *sevā*,[1] and the same word is used to describe Nānak's own
devotional discipline.[2] The characteristic janam-sākhī usage is, however,
a much more specific variety of 'service'. When the Sikhs are exhorted to
provide *sevā* the duty to which they are directed is that of ministering to
the needs of visiting sādhūs, particularly Nānak-panthī sādhūs. The
supreme *sevā* is, of course, the welcome accorded to the Gurū himself. It
is this which prompts the later development. After the janam-sākhī period
sevā is increasingly directed to the abode of the Gurū, which means first
the *saṅgat* and later still the gurdwara. Assistance in building a gurdwara,
the maintenance or cleaning of an existing gurdwara, and donations in
money, goods, or labour to a *laṅgar* (the gurdwara kitchen) are all common
expressions of the modern concept of *sevā* within the Sikh community.
Present indications suggest a further extension to cover humanitarian
service to all mankind.

The janam-sākhī understanding of *sevā* marks a slight shift from Nānak's
own meaning. A difference of a much more radical nature distinguishes the
janam-sākhī understanding of *nām simaran* from the technique indicated
by the Gurū. There is, it is true, more than one interpretation of 'remem-
bering the divine Name' to be found in the janam-sākhīs, and a few
narrators are evidently aware of Nānak's meaning. There is, however, a
general insistence upon the sufficiency of mechanical repetition, the most
common form being the chant 'gurū gurū'.[3] Nānak had sought to interior-
ize this devotional technique. The janam-sākhīs suggest a reversion to
practices which he regarded as thoroughly inadequate as a means of
salvation. Another evident deviation from the Gurū's teachings concerns
the janam-sākhī concept of God. Whereas for Nānak God was strictly
formless (*niraṅkār*, *nirguṇ*), the janam-sākhīs usually depict him in strongly
anthropomorphic terms. Nānak's characteristic name for God, Niraṅkār,
has passed into common usage, but its meaning has been so completely
forgotten that a narrator can speak of Nānak actually seeing the Formless
One with his eyes.[4]

Comments of this kind imply a general acceptance of such doctrines
within the community. Elsewhere a narrator or commentator emphasizes an
issue so deliberately that one must assume a background of contemporary
controversy. The stress laid upon the importance of the daily ritual bathe
suggests that the doctrine affirming it was either disputed or widely
neglected during the seventeenth century.[5]

---

[1] *B40*, f. 171b.
[2] *B40*, f. 106a. Cf. also *AS*, p. 24.
[3] Other words or phrases recommended for repetition are *rām, vāh gurū, nānak,* and *vāh nānak.*
[4] *B40*, f. 123b.
[5] *B40*, f. 141a-b. *Pur JS*, p. 76. *AS*, pp. 61–2. *Mih JS* II.267, 383–98.

Although references to the ritual bathing obligation appear in several of the janam-sākhīs all do not treat the controversy with the same concern. In this, as with so many other issues, it is the *Miharbān* tradition which betrays the strongest interest.[1] This underlines the necessity of distinguishing the different janam-sākhī traditions and, wherever possible, of determining their particular interests, the date of their composition, and the dates of individual manuscripts. Conclusions are not always easy to reach, particularly in the case of the composite *Miharbān* tradition, but the effort should certainly be made. The historical value of a janam-sākhī is greatly enhanced when its distinctive point of view and period of compilation can be identified. For the same reason the geographical location of a janam-sākhī and information concerning its narrator or compiler can also be of considerable interest.

Whereas most janam-sākhīs raise serious problems of identification, one at least offers some explicit answers and where direct information is lacking it provides sufficient pointers in its text to suggest tentative answers. This is, once again, that most useful of all janam-sākhīs, the *B40* manuscript. The compiler of this janam-sākhī was a Khatrī, Dayā Rām Abrol by name, who completed his work in S. 1790 (A.D. 1733).[2] He does not name the geographical location of the *sangat* for which he prepared his janam-sākhī, but internal evidence points to the area of Gujranwālā or Gujrāt.[3] Several sources were used in compiling the collection, and most of these can be identified.[4] Two other members of the *sangat* are mentioned. These are the patron of the janam-sākhī, Sangū Mal, and its illustrator, Ālam Chand the Mason.[5]

The importance of this information and of the contents of the janam-sākhī becomes apparent when this 1733 janam-sākhī is set within its historical context, or, to be more accurate, within that historical context as generally understood today. Our twentieth-century understanding of the early and middle eighteenth-century Sikh community derives almost exclusively from Khālsā sources, most of them much later than the period which they purport to describe. These sources represent the history of the period as one of Mughal persecution and of Sikh triumph over the attempt to exterminate the community. Everything is related directly to the growing power of the Khālsā, which, with its distinctive doctrines and discipline, constitutes the orthodox Sikh Panth of today. This status it owed (according to later tradition) to the intention and explicit commandments of Gurū Gobind Singh.

All this is completely absent from the *B40 Janam-sākhī*. It bears no evident mark of turbulent conditions, no mention of Bandā, no hint of persecution, no reference to the existence of the Khālsā or of either its

---

[1] See above, pp. 227–8.

[2] *B40*, ff. 84b, 230a–b.

[3] See *B40(Eng)* Introduction, pp. 19–25. The reference is to Gujrāt District in the Pañjāb, not to the Indian state of Gujarāt.

[4] See above, pp. 230–2.

[5] *B40*, ff. 84b, 231a. *B40(Eng)*, pp. 90–1.

military activities or its code of discipline. On the contrary, it suggests a *sangat* peaceably pursuing its devotional ideals with no evident awareness that the Khālsā brotherhood even exists. There is no evidence of a doctrine of the scriptural Gurū, the name Singh is nowhere mentioned, there are none of the characteristic Khālsā prohibitions (the *kurahit*), and at one point there is an unconcerned acceptance of the greatest of all Khālsā sins. Sākhī 13 relates how a poor Sikh cut his hair in order that he might sell it to buy food for Bābā Nānak.[1] The complete indifference shown towards this detail suggests that for this particular compiler and his *sangat* the issue could have been of no importance.

The obvious explanation is that the *sangat* for which the *B40 Janam-sākhī* was written must have represented the continuing 'religious' tradition of the Nānak-panth as opposed to the growing martial and political traditions of the Khālsā. For this *sangat* it was the religious message of *nām simaran* that mattered and questions of Sikh identity could still be answered by reference to the old ideal of direct allegiance to the first Gurū. The Jaṭ depilatory prohibition was of no concern, and other features of the Khālsā discipline which derived from Jaṭ custom or the struggle against Muslim invaders are likewise absent. Either they had not developed by 1733 or else they had not yet affected this *sangat* of Nānak-panthī Sikhs living, it seems, in a rural area near Gujranwālā or Gujrāt. The only issue which suggests a significant link with Khālsā doctrine is the stress which the *B40* compiler lays upon belief in the Gurū's mystical presence within the *sangat*.

Eventually Khālsā doctrine was to emerge as the sole orthodoxy and the normative means of determining Sikh social identity. Circumstances favoured the Khālsā ideal, and its later eighteenth-century growth increasingly reduced the 'religious' tradition to insignificance. The tradition has survived as the so-called *sahaj-dhārī* segment of Sikh society and it has always continued to command a substantial Khatrī following.[2] Its influence upon the later development of the Sikh community has, however, been far less than that of the dominant Khālsā. As the Khālsā rose to predominance it reinterpreted both doctrine and history in the light of its own struggles and ideals. The *B40 Janam-sākhī* reveals the continuing existence of other ideals and of earlier patterns of Sikh life and conduct during a period when the martial tradition is supposed to have been sovereign in the Panth. There can be no doubt that the Khālsā tradition was strongly in the ascendant by 1733, but clearly its dominance did not emerge with the speed or the completeness of later interpretations.

The *B40 Janam-sākhī* speaks with an unusual clarity. Others, though less explicit, do make their own distinctive contributions, particularly for the seventeenth-century period. Although gaps, large and tantalizing, must inevitably remain there is much to be learnt from the janam-sākhīs concerning the pre-Khālsā Sikh community of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This, and not their testimony to the historical Nānak, is the primary value of the janam-sākhīs as historical sources.

[1] *B40*, f. 49a. Cf. also f. 113a.   [2] *GTC* ii. 507.

4. THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS AS SOURCES FOR THE WIDER HISTORY OF THE PAÑJĀB

Although the principal yield of the janam-sākhīs must be in terms of distinctively Sikh history their value is by no means limited to the community and its interests. The narrators never divorce themselves from their rural context and as a result there are recurrent references to the village community and its way of life. In some instances such features are directly described as settings for anecdotes or as essential elements in a narrative; elsewhere they appear as aspects of the imagery which rural narrators inevitably use. The fact that these features are recorded unconsciously adds considerably to their value. There could be no possible reason for misrepresentation on such points, for any failure to accord with the experience and understanding of the narrator's audience would merely defeat the purpose of his anecdotes. In the janam-sākhīs rural Pañjāb speaks with an authentic voice, and although they rarely tell us more than a small part of what we should like to know the janam-sākhīs do nevertheless provide a valuable supplement to the Persian chronicles and European reports of the same period.

The range of possibilities is wide, and different interests will extract different items from the janam-sākhī material. Only two brief examples will be offered here, examples which illustrate both the usefulness of the janam-sākhī contribution and its fragmentary nature. In the *Purātan* version of 'The Rich Man's Pennants' the central figure, Dūnī Chand, is described as a Khatrī of substantial wealth.[1] From a narrowly economic point of view the interesting feature of this anecdote is the use which Dūnī Chand makes of his wealth. It will be observed that he does two things. Much of it he spends on ostentatious ceremony (a large *śrāddh* feast) and the remainder he hoards as treasure. Such observations do not provide any final solution to the question of bullion disposal, but they do provide a glimpse of one seventeenth-century Pañjābī's views on the use of surplus wealth.[2]

The second example is to be found in the *B40* sākhī describing the death of Nānak, a portion of the janam-sākhī which consists of seventeenth-century material. Many years ago Moreland, while assuming the existence of landless labourers during the sixteenth century, acknowledged his inability to find any examples of such a class in the literature of the period.[3] Bābā Kamalā who served precisely this function[4] would not have provided a complete answer to Moreland's problem, but had this reference been known to him he could hardly have overlooked it.

It is generally in this circumstantial manner that the janam-sākhīs yield

---

[1] *Pur JS*, pp. 70–1. See above, p. 126.

[2] For a more detailed discussion of this and other mercantile issues arising from janam-sākhī references see W. H. McLeod, 'Trade and Investment in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Panjab', in Harbans Singh and N. G. Barrier (ed.), *Essays in Honour of Dr Gaṇḍā Singh* (Paṭiālā, 1976), pp. 81–91.

[3] W. H. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar* (London, 1920), p. 112.

[4] *B40*, f. 221a.

their significant information concerning the wider life of seventeenth-century rural Pañjāb. When Nānak sets out on a minor trading enterprise it is the setting of the anecdote which refers the reader to issues beyond the essentially hagiographic interests of the narrator.[1] The story of the indigent Sikh who cut his hair briefly describes cooking procedures,[2] and a later discourse concerning true purity refers to the ritual purity of the Hindu cooking-square.[3] A declaration of Nānak's spiritual supremacy prompts a list of contemporary religious panths,[4] and an esoteric discourse on true renunciation provides an inventory of articles carried by a faqīr.[5] In some instances the value of a testimony lies in its failure to mention particular details, as for example the absence of references to irrigation. Elsewhere an absence noted by a narrator can be converted into a positive statement by the reader. When Chatur Dās, the paṇḍit of Banāras, comments on what Nānak is *not* wearing he thereby supplies a list of what a conventional Vaiṣṇava *bhagat* might be expected to wear.[6]

To many this variety of information may seem a poor return for the labour which is required in order to extract it. Much will depend on one's view of what is important in history. If the historian's interest is to be confined to dates, chronologies, and the mighty event then the janam-sākhīs have little to offer. The Persian courtly chronicles will be much better suited to his purposes. If, on the other hand, significance is to be found rather in the unspectacular life of the people of any particular place over any particular period of time, then there is much to be derived from the janam-sākhī testimony. Any significance of this kind will be considerably enhanced when a clear connection can be traced between an unspectacular past and living issues in the present. This certainly applies in the case of the janam-sākhīs. For any understanding of the modern Sikh community a knowledge of both Khālsā and pre-Khālsā Sikh history is vital.

[1] *Bālā JS*, p. 16.
[2] *B40*, f. 80a–b. See also *Pur JS*, p. 72.
[3] *B40*, f. 49a.
[4] *B40*, f. 106a. See also *Mih JS* II. 301.
[5] *B40*, ff. 205b–207b.
[6] *Pur JS*, p. 26.

15

THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS IN PAÑJĀBĪ
LITERATURE

ALTHOUGH this examination of the janam-sākhīs is not intended to be a literary study it would be inappropriate to conclude it without some brief mention of their considerable importance in the history of Pañjābī literature. Their significance in this respect is twofold. The janam-sākhīs are important as the first examples of sustained Pañjābī prose, and in a more general sense they have continued to exercise a perceptible influence upon the style and imagery of all later generations of Pañjābī writers.

Pañjābī literature has, like most literature in South Asia, been predominantly poetic. It reached an early climax in the supremely beautiful compositions of Gurū Nānak and has since produced a steady stream of notable works. Prominent amongst these are the hymns of some of the later Gurūs (particularly the *Sukhmanī* of Gurū Arjan[1]) and the works of Pañjābī Sūfīs. The more celebrated amongst the latter include Shāh Husain (1539–93), Bulhe Shāh (1680–1758), and Hāsham Shāh (1735–1823). The song cycles of *Hīr Rāñjhā, Sassī Punnū, Mirzā Sāhibān*, and *Sohṇī Mehivāl*, which have for centuries held a place of particular affection in the Pañjābī heart, are merely the most famous of a substantial corpus of poetic folk literature. This poetic impulse continues to the present day. Urdū is not the only language used at *mushā'aras* in the Pañjāb, and suggestions that Pañjābī is an uncouth language can only be made by those who have no knowledge of its literature.

Prose has been a less important part of this literature and with only one significant exception did not achieve widespread popularity as a literary form until the twentieth century. The single exception was the janam-sākhī. Pañjābī prose literature was inaugurated by the earliest janam-sākhīs and sustained by later representatives of the form for a period of almost three centuries. Today it has yielded this primacy, but it has done so to a literary form which is in some measure its descendant. The virile Pañjābī short story traces its antecedents to the janam-sākhī anecdote as well as to more obvious western models.[2]

It is not surprising that a hagiographic tradition should emerge as the first important contribution to Pañjābī prose. Early prose is commonly derived direct from a dominant oral tradition; and hagiography, which gives expression to an inevitable impulse, is better suited to prose anecdotes

---

[1] *AG*, pp. 262–96.

[2] Swinder Singh Uppal, *Panjabi Short Story: Its Origin and Development* (New Delhi, 1966), pp. 171, 186–7.

than to verse. Other Indian vernaculars have produced the same pattern, and the Pañjābī example shares most of the features observed in these other early representatives of regional prose traditions.[1] Although it is not true to claim that the janam-sākhī narrative style 'reads like poetry in bad prose rendering',[2] one will certainly find in the earlier janam-sākhīs a predictable absence of developed sentence structure and repeated recourse to a limited range of stylistic conventions. Conjunctions are rarely used, and punctuation is either restricted to pairs of vertical strokes (*do ḍaṇḍe*) or completely omitted. Sentences frequently begin with the adverbial *tā(n)* or *tab* ('then') or with such expressions as *bābājī ākhiā* ('Bābājī said . . .'). Tenses are restricted in range, compound forms are rare, and even the future tense is sparingly used.

Later janam-sākhīs gradually improve their prose style, but the process is a slow one. Although the printed *Bālā* versions of the late nineteenth century are not the primitive products of the early seventeenth century it can scarcely be claimed that they represent a mature prose style. This does not emerge in the janam-sākhī literature until the twentieth-century appearance of Vīr Singh's *Srī Gurū Nānak Chamatkār*.[3] In Vīr Singh's work it emerges in a highly distinguished form, a testimony to the author's considerable literary skills as well as to his deep personal piety. His was the last important contribution to the form. Vīr Singh himself marks the first significant beginnings of the Pañjābī novel, and the growth of the Pañjābī short story followed soon after.

The well-springs have thus run dry and the flow of sākhīs has at last ceased. We still live, however, in a period of continuing influence. There must be very few Sikh children who do not know at least some of the more popular janam-sākhī anecdotes, and Pañjābīs of all generations can readily call to mind stories of the first Gurū which have been firmly implanted in their earliest memories. Although this influence must certainly diminish, it is inconceivable that it could ever be completely extinguished. Memories of Nānak are too intimately tied to janam-sākhī images and impressions for this to occur. To suggest that the legacy of the janam-sākhīs may eventually disappear would be to imply that the Pañjāb may one day forget Gurū Nānak.

[1] Ian Raeside, 'Early Prose Fiction in Marathi, 1828–85', in *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. xxvii, no. 4 (August 1968), pp. 791–2.

[2] I. Serebryakov, *Punjabi Literature* (Moscow, 1968), p. 43.

[3] Two volumes, Amritsar, 1928 and 1933.

APPENDIX 1

THE CONTENTS OF THE EARLIEST BĀLĀ VERSIONS

It was noted in the section dealing with the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs that the first of the Gurmukhī printed editions (*Lithographed Edition A*) generally corresponds closely to the earliest of the extant manuscript versions (*Recension A*). It was also observed that some significant differences do occur. Because *Lithographed Edition A* has been used for most *Bālā* citations in this study it is important that these differences should be distinguished. Three general differences are the omission of all Hindālī references in the lithographed edition; its occasional use of the *Purātan* tradition as a substitute for *Bālā* material; and inevitably the addition of a small cluster of death sākhīs. Although the latter feature suggests an association with *Recension B*, a textual comparison will at once demonstrate that the bulk of the printed material has been taken from a *Recension A* manuscript. Specific differences involving more than isolated words and sentences are as follows.

1. 'Bābā Nānak's Visit to Nānakmatā', sākhī 23 of the printed edition,[1] does not appear in the manuscripts. The editor of the printed edition has interpolated it from a *Purātan* source.

2. Sākhī 25 of the printed edition follows the manuscript text for only a few lines and then takes up a *Purātan* text. This *Purātan* text continues through to the end of sākhī 28 of the printed edition, covering in the process the following anecdotes:

    25. The Country Ruled by Women
    26. The Encounter with Kaliyug
    27. The City of Insects
    28. The Meeting with Sheikh Farīd in the Land of Āsā.

    The actual break takes place on page 103 of the printed edition at the beginning of line 13, and with the opening of sākhī 29 ('The Meeting with Rājā Śivanābh') the printed text reverts to that of the manuscripts. The manuscripts have a more primitive version of 'The Country Ruled by Women' sākhī. They do not have versions of the other three interpolated sākhīs.

3. The editor of the printed edition has introduced the *Purātan* version of the anecdote 'Mecca: the moving *miharāb*' into the *Bālā* Mecca sākhī. The interpolation begins in line 6 of page 184 and concludes with line 20 of page 185. In the manuscripts this anecdote appears in the Medīnā sākhī, and is there repeated in its distinctive *Bālā* form by the printed edition.[2]

4. In the course of an encounter with Kabīr the manuscripts introduce references to a mysterious Jaṭ who is obviously Hindāl.[3] This passage has been omitted from the printed text.

5. Both texts have a discourse with Sheikh Sharaf, but the printed edition abandons the *Bālā* manuscript version and uses instead a radically different *Purātan* version.[4]

6. Immediately after its Sharaf discourse the manuscript version records the

---

[1] *Bālā JS*, pp. 99–101.   [2] *B41*, f. 122a. *Bālā JS*, p. 188.
[3] *B41*, ff. 142a–143a.   [4] *B41*, f. 187a–b. *Bālā JS*, sākhī 66, pp. 296–300.

Hindālī narrative which describes previous incarnations in the court of Janak and contrasts Hindāl's exalted status with the lowly position occupied by Nānak.[1] This theme is continued in a briefer passage which occurs shortly after the principal narrative.[2] Both passages have been omitted from the printed edition.

7. The manuscript version includes a lengthy discourse with various persons (Lālo, Gopīnāth, Hayat Khān, Ajittā, etc.) which the printed edition has omitted.[3]

8. Sākhīs 74 and 75 of the printed edition do not correspond to the two sākhīs which appear at this point in the manuscripts. In the manuscript version both sākhīs relate discourses with Jittā (i.e. Ajittā Randhāvā) in Pakho village, and the second makes an insulting reference to an alleged liaison between Nānak and the daughter of a Muslim Raṅghaṛ.[4] The printed edition substitutes the *Purātan* sākhīs 'The Proud Karoṛī Humbled' and 'The Kashmīrī Paṇḍit'.

9. The manuscript version includes two further Pakho discourses which the printed edition omits.[5] One is said to have been held with Mātā Choṇī and Mañjot; and the other with a Sindhī.

10. The two texts diverge at their conclusions, with the printed edition recording the *Recension B* death sākhīs.[6] The manuscripts are not all consistent at this point. In the India Office Library *B41* manuscript the conclusion consists of three brief sākhīs, one of which narrates the mischievous tale of how Bābā Nānak asked Aṅgad for his daughter.[7]

These variants must be borne in mind when using the table of contents set out below or when consulting the printed edition published by Hāfaz Qutub Dīn in 1871.[8] The table of contents includes both the manuscript *Recension A* sākhīs and also those of the *Lithographed Edition A* (the Hāfaz Qutub Dīn edition). The serial numbers in the first column are the sākhī numbers used by the editor of the Hāfaz Qutub Dīn edition. Those of the second column are the numbers attached to successive sākhīs in the 1658 Delhi manuscript.[9] The third column lists the relevant folio numbers of the India Office Library *B41* manuscript. This latter manuscript, unlike the Delhi version, does not have a table of contents attached, and the numbering of sākhīs in the actual text is irregular.[10] For this reason each sākhī is identified by the folio on which it commences.

The titles used for individual sākhīs are not necessarily translations of Pañjābī titles appearing in either the manuscript or printed versions. Where a Pañjābī title conveys little or no impression of the actual content of a sākhī it has been replaced by a more helpful title.

Square brackets indicate sākhīs which appear only in the printed edition. They do not constitute a part of the authentic *Bālā* tradition and should not be regarded as such. The absence of a number in the first column indicates material which is present in the manuscripts but absent from the printed edition. This material

---

[1] *B41*, ff. 187b–190a.   [2] *B41*, ff. 192b–193a.   [3] *B41*, ff. 198a–205a.
[4] *B41*, ff. 214b–219b. Cf. above, p. 214n.   [5] *B41*, ff. 228b–231b.
[6] *Bālā JS*, p. 384 (from line 12).   [7] *B41*, ff. 250b–252b.

[8] The sākhī numbers are those used in the actual text, not those given in the book's table of contents. Numbers 60–6, as recorded in the table of contents, misdirect the reader.

[9] The table of contents appended to this manuscript was copied by Dr. Rattan Singh Jaggi of Paṭiālā and reproduced by Professor Piār Singh as an appendix to his doctoral thesis 'A Critical Survey of Panjabi Prose in the Seventeenth Century' (Panjab University, Chaṇḍīgaṛh, 1968), pp. 300–3.

[10] In so far as it retains consistency it agrees with the 1658 Delhi manuscript.

must be treated as a part of the authentic *Bālā* tradition. The absence of a figure from the second column does not, however, mean that the relevant sākhī is necessarily missing from the 1658 manuscript. This should be assumed only when the entry is bracketed. In some instances the 1658 manuscript has amalgamated sākhīs which appear separately in the printed edition, and at the very beginning of its table of contents the numbering is confused. It has also omitted number 43 by mistake.

Bālā *JS*	1658 MS	IOL MS B41	*Sākhī title*
1	1	1a	Prologue: the search for the *janam-patrī*
2	2a	4b	The Birth of Bābā Nānak
3	2b	6b	Instruction by the Paṇḍit
4		9a	Grazing the Buffaloes: the Tree's Stationary Shadow
4	3a	9a	The Cobra's Hood
5	3b	9b	Sowing the Field
6	4	10b	*Kharā Saudā*, the Good Bargain
7	5a	15a	The Marriage of Jai Rām and Nānakī
8	5b	17a	A Meeting with an Ascetic
9	6a	18a	Sultānpur
10	6b	19a	Employment in Daulat Khān's Commissariat
11	7	24a	Betrothal
12	8	29b	The Marriage of Nānak
13	9	35b	The Birth of Nānak's children
14	10	37a	An Encounter with Sāmā Paṇḍit
15	11–12	38a	Mūlā Choṇā appeals to Daulat Khān: discourse with the Qāzī
16	13	42b	Departure from Sultānpur
17	14	48a	Mardānā meets Firandā the Minstrel
18	15	49b	Bābā Nānak meets Firandā
19	16	55b	Bābā Nānak visits Lālo the Carpenter
20	17	59b	Malak Bhāgo's feast
21	18	61a	Discourse with Malak Bhāgo
22	19	69a	Return to Talvaṇḍī: Discourse with parents and Rāi Bulār
[23			Nānakmatā]
24	20	70a	Visit to Dacca in Bengal: Mardānā eats the forbidden fruit
[25	20	70b	The Country Ruled by Women] (MSS and printed edition differ)
[26			The Encounter with Kaliyug]
[27			The City of Insects]
[28			The Meeting with Sheikh Farīd in the Land of Āsā]
29	21	71b	Rājā Śivanābh
30	22	74a	The Monster's Cauldron
31	23	76b	Sālas Rāi the Jeweller
32	24	84a	A Monster Fish Redeemed
33	25	86a	Bābā Nānak's Meeting with Kāl and Nārad
34	26	88a	Discourse with Rājā Sudhar Saiṇ, Indar Saiṇ, and Jhaṇḍā the Carpenter in the Land of Biśahar
35	27	100b	Discourse with Rājā Madhar Bain on the Island of Silmilā

Bālā JS	1658 MS	IOL MS B41	Sākhī title
36	28	104a	Discourse with Rājā Devalūt and demons
37	29	108a	Discourse with Rājā Tīkhaṇ Vaiṇ and Jungle Men (*banmānus*)
38	30	109a	Discourse with Rājā Kaval Nain in Suvaranpur
39	31	119a	Mecca [The moving *miharāb*]
40	32	121b	Medīnā: the moving tomb
41	33	125b	Meeting with Nānakī in Sultānpur
42		127a	Mardānā drinks nectar (*ras*) in the Land of Mārūfar
43	34	128b	Mount Sirdhār in Himāchal: discourse with Gorakhnāth
44		131b	Mount Ūnā: discourse with Machhendranāth and Bharatharī
45		135a	Discourse with Bhaṅgarnāth
46		135b	Mount Kūnā: discourse with Kanīfā, Hanīfā, Gopīchand, etc.
47		143a	Mount Mīnā: discourse with Saṅgharnāth, Maṅgalnāth, etc.
48		148b	Mount Sumeru: discourse with Gorakhnāth
49	35	160a	Mount Byār: discourse with Datātre
50	36	162b	Mount Alalāchīn
51	37	163b	Discourse with Prahalād
52	38	166a	Mount Kailāś: discourse with Dhrū
53	39	166b	Discourse with Dhrū (contd.). Mount Akhand (the Topless Mountain): discourse with God and Kabīr
54	40	168a	Mount Kalkā: discourse with Mardānā
55	41	169a	Mount Sīlā: ambrosia
56	42	170b	Mount Uhār: discourse with Kalyān
57	44	173a	Mount Ikhan: discourse with Rājā Janak
58	45	174a	Discourse with Rakhīsar
59	46	175a	Mount Ulkā. Bābā Nānak proceeds to Khuramā City: death and cremation of Mardānā
60	47	177b	Rāmeśvaram: discourse with Gorakhnāth and Siddhs
61	48	181a	Achal Baṭālā: discourse with Gorakhnāth and Bharatharī
62	49	182a	Return to Talvaṇḍī: discourse with Mardānā's son Śahzādā at Chandar Bhān Sandhū's well
63	50	183a	Sajjaṇ the criminal Vaiṣṇava
64	51	186a	Śahzādā visits his father's *samādhi* in Khuramā
65	52	187a	Qandahār: discourse with Yār Alī
[66			Pāṇīpat: discourse with Sheikh Sharaf]
	53	187a	Discourse with Sheikh Sharaf Paṭhān of Bidar
	54	187b	Discourse with Dīnā Nāth Dayāl
67	55	190a	Discourse with Valī Qandhārī and Sharaf Paṭhān
68	56	192b	Kābul: discourse with Mān Chand Khatrī (MSS only include further references to Dīnā Nāth and Valī Qandhārī.)
69	57	196a	Ṭillā: discourse with Bālgundāī
	58–9	198a	Discourse with Lālo, Gopīnāth, etc.

Bālā JS	1658 MS	IOL MS B41	Sākhi title
70	60	205a	Pakho: discourse with Mūlā Choṇā and Ajittā Randhāvā
71		206b	Visit to Kurukshetra
72	61	208a	A Khatrī defames Nānak before Ibrāhīm Lodī: hand-mills turn miraculously. Bābur's invasion and capture of Bābā Nānak
73	62	211a	Discourse with Bābur
[74			The Proud Karoṛī Humbled]
[75			The Kashmīrī Paṇḍit]
	63	214b	Pakho; discourse with Ajittā, Mūlā Choṇā, Chando, and Mātā Choṇī
	64	217a	Discourse with Ajittā in Pakho
76	65	219b	Discourse with Būṛā Randhāvā in Pakho
77	66	221b	Discourse with Sheikh Mālo Takhān in Pakho
78	67	223a	Discourse with Ubārā Khān
79	68	224a	Discourse with Ubārā Khān and Shāh Adarmān (Abdul Rahmān)
80	69	226a	Discourse with Shāh Adarmān
	70	228b	Pakho: Mātā Choṇī and Mañjot
		229a	Discourse with a Sindhī
81	70–4	231b	Visit to Uch: meeting with Sayyid Jalāl
82		235b	Bābā Nānak decides to visit Pāk Paṭṭan
83	75–6	235b	Discourse with Sheikh Braham
84	77	247a	Talvaṇḍī: discourse with Lālū
85	78	247a	Pakho: Bālā leaves Bābā Nānak and returns to Talvaṇḍī
86	79	247b	Discourse: Gurū Aṅgad and Bālā
[87			The annunciation of Bābā Nānak's death: Kamalā and the yogīs. Sidhāran]
[88			Discourse with God]
[89			Final preparations: the Death of Nānak]
[90			The Disappearance of Bābā Nānak's Body]

APPENDIX 2

CONTENTS OF THE PURĀTAN JANAM-SĀKHĪS

The *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī* contains the sākhīs listed below. The serial numbers correspond to the numbering used by Vīr Singh in his *Purātan Janam-sākhī*. Lower-case letters indicate the separate anecdotes included in composite sākhīs. The *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* corresponds exactly in terms of contents, except that it lacks numbers 35b, 40, and 41, and includes number 29b which the *Hāfizābād* version lacks. Numbers 26 and 27, although recorded in the text as separate sākhīs, actually constitute a single anecdote. Most other janam-sākhīs which include both 8 and 9 incorporate them within a single Sultānpur sākhī.

1. The Birth of Nānak
2. Instruction by the Paṇḍit
3. Bābā Nānak's Betrothal and Marriage
4. The Ruined Crop Restored
5. The Tree's Stationary Shadow
6. The True Field and the True Merchandise
7. Bābā Nānak's Discourse with the Physician
8. The Departure for Sultānpur
9. Employment in Daulat Khān's Commissariat
10. Immersion in the River
11. Bābā Nānak's Discourse with Daulat Khān's Qāzī
12. Bābā Nānak's Travels in the Uninhabited Wilderness (I) (Mardānā commanded to throw offerings away)
13. Sajjaṇ the Robber
14. Discourse with Sheikh Sharaf of Pāṇīpat
15. Delhi: the Sultān's Elephant Resurrected
16. Sheikh Bajīd
17. Banāras: Discourse with Chatur Dās
18. Nānakmatā
19. The Death of the Trader's Infant Son
20. A Watchman receives Royal Authority
21. The Coal and the Thorn
22. The Robbers and the Funeral Pyre
23. The Country Ruled by Women
24. The Encounter with Kaliyug
25. The City of Insects
26. The Inhospitable Village Unmolested
27. The Hospitable Village Dispersed
28. A Discourse with Sheikh Farīd in the Land of Āsā (three anecdotes)
    a. Sheikh Farīd and the Gold Coins
    b. Sheikh Farīd and the Unbroken Skull
    c. Sheikh Farīd's Wooden Loaf
29a. Jhaṇḍā the Carpenter
29b. A Recitation of the *Jugāvali* [*Colebrooke* only]

APPENDIX 3

CONTENTS OF THE ĀDI SĀKHĪS

This table of contents follows the text of the Motī Bāgh Palace manuscript of the *Ādi Sākhīs*, and Piār Singh's printed edition based on the Motī Bāgh text.

APPENDIX 4

THE CONTENTS OF LDP 194

For a list of *B40* contents see above, pp. 230–2. The contents of the *Miharbān* and *Gyān-ratanāvali* collections are much more extensive than those of the other major janam-sākhīs and for this reason are not listed in appendices. The more important anecdotes and discourses are included in the comparative table set out on pages 73–6 of *GNSR*. On pages 51–64 of the same work there appears a summary paraphrase of the contents of *Pothi Sach-Khaṇḍ* (the first and most important of the three sections of the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhi*).

APPENDIX 5

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF JANAM-SĀKHĪS

1. *The* Colebrooke Janam-sākhī

Trumpp included a translation of the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* in the introduction to his *The Ādi Granth* (pp. vii–xlv). Like his rendering of the opening rāgas of the Ādi Granth this translation contains numerous errors and is stilted to the point of being almost unreadable. Allowance must, however, be made for the pioneering nature of the work (Trumpp published it in 1877), and if one can look beyond the dullness of the work and its insulting references to the Sikh scriptures one must acknowledge that Trumpp was, for his period, an observer of considerable perception. The contents of the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* are listed in Appendix 2. For a note on the decision to commission the translation and also a brief biographical sketch of Trumpp see Robert Needham Cust, *Linguistic and Oriental Essays*, Third Series (London, 1891), pp. 262–5.

2. *Selections from the* Bālā *tradition*

(a) E. Trumpp, The Adi Granth, *pp. xlvi–lxxvi*.
Trumpp designated the *Colebrooke* manuscript *Janam-sakhi A*, and the *Bālā* manuscript catalogued as Panj. B41 in the India Office Library he labelled *Janam-sakhi B*. The latter he erroneously describes as an 'enlarged recompilation of A'.[1] His translation of the *Bālā* manuscript shares the characteristics noted above in the description of his *Colebrooke* translation. Of the sākhīs listed in Appendix 1 it covers only numbers 1–15, the opening sentences of 16, and 85–6. At its conclusion Trumpp adds a translation of the *Lithographed Edition A*[2] version of the death of Nānak.

(b) Henry Court, History of the Sikhs, *pp. 142–239*.
Court's *History of the Sikhs*, published in Lahore in 1888, is an English translation of Śardhā Rām's Pañjābī work *Sikhān de Rāj di Vikhiā (sic: Vithiā)*, first published in Ludhiānā in 1884. Śardhā Rām had included a selection of twenty sākhīs from a late nineteenth-century *Bālā* version, and this selection Court reproduces in his translation. It comprises the following anecdotes. The titles are those used by Court, with explanatory comments added in parentheses where necessary to identify particular anecdotes.

1. Discourse with Gupāl the Teacher (Instruction by the Paṇḍit)
2. Discourse regarding the Brahmanical Thread
3. Discourse with the Physician
4. Discourse about the store (Talvaṇḍī, not Sultānpur)
5. Conversation regarding the betrothal of Nānak (Bābā Nānak's betrothal.

---

[1] Loc. cit., p. xlvi.   [2] See above, pp. 21, 271.

The departure for Sultānpur. Employment in Daulat Khān's commissariat. Nānak accused of embezzlement.)

6. The discourse regarding the marriage of Nānak
7. The discourse with Paṇḍat Sāmā
8. The discourse with Nawāb Daulat Khān (Bābā Nānak's discourse with Daulat Khān's qāzī)
9. The discourse with Rāi Bulhār
10. The discourse regarding the idol Sālig Rām
11. Conversation about the Ārtī Sohilā
12. The discourse in Sanglā with Rājā Siv Nāth
13. The discourse with Mīān Mitthā (Two parts, the first corresponding to *B40* sākhī 9, and the second to *Purātan* sākhī 36.)
14. The discourse with the Siddhs, or Hindū saints (The first part corresponds to *B40* sākhī 53. The second part set in an unnamed location over the sea.)
15. The discourse with the worshippers of Govind (in Ajudhiā)
16. The discourse with the Demon Kauṇḍā (the Monster's Cauldron)
17. The discourse with Sultān Hamīd Kārūn (Qārūn of Rūm)
18. The discourse with Paṇḍat Chattardās Banārsi
19. The discourse with Kālū (the Return to Talvaṇḍī: discourse with his mother and father)
20. The discourse with the Paṇḍats of Banāras (corresponding to a portion of *B40* sākhī 21)

3. *W. H. McLeod*, The B40 Janam-sākhī. An English translation with introduction and annotations of the India Office Library Gurmukhi manuscript Panj. B40, a janam-sākhī of Gurū Nānak compiled in A.D. 1733 by Dayā Rām Abrol. *Amritsar*, 1979.

4. *Bhāī Gurdās's* Vār I, *stanzas 23–45; and* Vār XI, *stanzas 13–14.*

An English translation of Bhāī Gurdās's account of Bābā Nānak has been published in *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak.*[1] Bhāī Gurdās's account includes, in full or in part, the following anecdotes. *Vār* I stanza numbers are given in parentheses.

1. Bābā Nānak's Austerities (24)
2. An Interview with God (24)
3. Bābā Nānak Visits the Places of Pilgrimage (25–6)
4. A Discourse with Siddhs on Mount Sumeru (28–31)
5. Mecca: the moving *miharāb* (32–4)
6. Bāghdād: Discourse with Dastgīr (35–6)
7. Visit to Medīnā (37. Brief reference only)
8. The Installation of Gurū Aṅgad (38, 44)
9. A Discourse with Siddhs at Achal (39–44)
10. Multān: the jasmine petal (44)

[1] *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 32–43. For the Pañjābī text see *SLTGN(Pbi)*, pp. 13–19.

5. *The* Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak

Sources on the Life and Teachings of Gurū Nānak also includes a translation of the portion of the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak* relating to Nānak.[1] The following anecdotes are to be found in it. Numbers in parentheses indicate the page-numbers of the English Section of *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak.*

---

[1] *SLTGN(Eng)*, pp. 59–87. For the Pañjābī text see *SLTGN(Pbi)*, pp. 32–46.

APPENDIX 6

HOLDINGS OF JANAM-SĀKHĪ MANUSCRIPTS

The principal library collections of manuscript janam-sākhīs within the Pañjāb are held by the following institutions:

1. The Sikh History Research Department of Khalsa College, Amritsar.
2. The Sikh Reference Library at the Golden Temple, Amritsar.
3. Bhāṣā Vibhāg, Paṭiālā (the Languages Department of the Pañjāb Government)
4. The Central Public Library, Paṭiālā.
5. Pañjab University, Chaṇḍīgaṛh.
6. The Pañjābī Sāhit Akādemī, Ludhiānā.

Important private collections are those of the former Mahārājā of Paṭiālā, Dr Gaṇḍā Singh of Paṭiālā, Professor Prītam Singh of Amritsar, and Sardār Shamsher Singh Ashok of Amritsar. Individual manuscripts are held by various families and institutions. For details of most manuscripts currently located in the Pañjāb see Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Pañjābī hath-likhatān dī sūchī* (Paṭiālā, 2 vols., 1961 and 1963, cited in footnotes as *PHLS*); Gaṇḍā Singh, *A Bibliography of the Punjab* (Paṭiālā, 1966); and Kirpāl Singh, *A Catalogue of Punjabi and Urdu Manuscripts in the Sikh History Research Department* (Amritsar, 1963).

The most significant of overseas collections is the India Office Library holding, a group of three manuscripts which owes its importance to the age and representative nature of its contents rather than to its size. For descriptions of its manuscripts Panj. B6, Panj. B40, and Panj. B41 see above, pp. 20, 23–5, 43. See also the introduction to *B40 (Eng)*; and C. Shackle, *Catalogue of the Panjabi and Sindhi Manuscripts in the India Office Library* (London, 1977), pp. 19–22. The smaller British Library holding merely duplicates a portion of the India Office Library collection. The libraries of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and the University of Cambridge each possess one *Bālā* manuscript.

APPENDIX 7

THE ĀDI GRANTH

The structure of the Ādi Granth

One of the distinctive features of the Ādi Granth is the systematic order of its contents. A regular pattern is plainly evident throughout the volume and very few exceptions to this pattern can be found. In the case of the modern printed editions regularity is carried to the extent of maintaining a standard pagination. All editions have a total of 1,430 pages, and all correspond exactly in terms of the material printed on individual pages. The complete volume may be divided into the following primary categories:

A.	Introductory section	pp.	1–13
B.	The rāgas	pp.	14–1353
C.	Miscellaneous works	pp.	1353–1430

The first and third of these involve no further subdivisions, but within the second category individual works are recorded in accordance with a detailed system of classification.

Introductory section

The opening pages of the Ādi Granth record the following compositions:

1. The *Japji* of Gurū Nānak, preceded by the *Mūl Mantra*[1] and ending with a stanza by Gurū Aṅgad. This work, which is regarded as an epitome of the teachings of Gurū Nānak, is customarily recited by devout Sikhs shortly after rising in the morning.[2]

2. *Sodar*. A collection of nine hymns, four of which are by Gurū Nānak, three by Gurū Rām Dās, and two by Gurū Arjan. The collection takes its name from the first word of the first hymn (a variant version of stanza 27 of *Japji*). The nine hymns together constitute the greater portion of *Sodar Raharās*, a selection which is customarily sung at sunset.[3]

3. *Sohilā*, or *Kīrtan Sohilā*. A collection of five hymns, three of them by Gurū Nānak and one each by Gurū Rām Dās and Gurū Arjan. This selection is customarily sung immediately before retiring at night, and also at funerals.[4]

All the hymns which constitute *Sodar* and *Sohilā* are subsequently repeated under their appropriate rāgas (including the one which has already appeared as a stanza of *Japji*). Their appearance at the beginning of the Ādi Granth suggests that they had already acquired a distinctive devotional or liturgical function by the time the original volume was compiled in A.D. 1603–4.

The rāgas

This section constitutes by far the greater portion of the Ādi Granth and it is within this section that we find the characteristic pattern of division and sub-division. The system of classification is as follows:

---

[1] See *B40(Eng)*, p. 3n.

[2] *Sikh Rahit Maryādā* (Amritsar, 1961), p. 10.

[3] Ibid., p. 11.

[4] Ibid., p. 11. *MK*, p. 173, App., p. 24.

1. The entire section is first classified according to rāga, or metre. The first of these, *Sirī Rāg*, begins on page 14 and continues to page 93. It is followed on page 94 by the rāga entitled *Mājh*, which in turn is followed by *Gaurī* (pp. 151–346). Next comes *Āsa* (pp. 347–488), and in this manner the text continues through a total of thirty-one rāgas. The section finally terminates with the minor rāga *Jaijavanti* (pp. 1352–3).

2. Within each rāga there is a secondary classification, as follows:

   (a) *Chaupad*. Hymns by the Gurūs, each consisting of four short stanzas with refrain.

   (b) *Aṣṭapadī*. Hymns by the Gurūs, normally consisting of eight stanzas each (occasionally more), with refrain.

   (c) *Chhant* (*chhand*). Hymns by the Gurūs of variable length, commonly of four or six long stanzas.

   (d) Miscellaneous longer works by the Gurūs (e.g. Guru Arjan's *Sukhmani* in *Gaurī* rāga; Guru Nānak's *Siddh Goṣṭ* in *Rāmkalī* rāga).

   (e) *Vār*. The *vār* of the Ādi Granth is a distinctive form, to be distinguished from the ode-form to which the name is normally applied.[1] The framework of an Ādi Granth *vār* is constituted by a series of stanzas (*paurī*). Each *paurī* is preceded by a number of couplets or subsidiary stanzas called *ślok* (shalok). With one exception[2] the *vārs* are all composite structures embodying selections from the works of the Gurūs. The *paurīs* of any particular *vār* will all be by one Gurū, but the shaloks may be by any of the Gurūs. Of all the *vārs* the most famous is *Vār Āsā*, the *paurīs* of which are by Gurū Nānak.[3]

   (f) *Bhagat bāṇī*, 'the works of the bhagats', i.e. the compositions of religious poets whose doctrines accorded with those of the Gurūs. Particular prominence has been given to Kabīr, Nāmdev, and Ravidās (Raidās).

3. Yet another classification is made within the *chaupads*, *aṣṭapadīs*, and *chhants*. Each of these three groupings is itself divided according to author. First come the *chaupads* of Gurū Nānak, next those of Gurū Amar Dās, followed by those of Gurū Rām Dās, and finally those of Gurū Arjan.[4] These are followed by the *aṣṭapadīs* of Gurū Nānak, and in this manner the classification continues to the end of the *chhant* section. Each of the Gurūs is designated not by name but by the word *mahalā*, followed by the appropriate number. The formula *mahalā 1* denotes Gurū Nānak, *mahalā 3* denotes the third Gurū, Amar Dās, etc. The *śloks* of Gurū Aṅgad are distinguished in the same manner (i.e. with the formula *mahalā 2*).[5] The designation is often abbreviated to its initial letter (*M1* denoting Gurū

---

[1] I. Serebryakov, *Punjabi Literature* (Moscow, 1968), pp. 18–21.

[2] *Vār Rāmkalī* by Rāi Balvaṇḍ and Sattā the Ḍūm, *AG*, pp. 966–8. This *vār*, a panegyric of the Gurūs by two of their followers, is simply a series of stanzas with no shaloks. It represents the standard ode-form, not the composite form found elsewhere in the Ādi Granth.

[3] *Vār Āsā*, or *Āsā dī Vār*, *AG*, pp. 463–75, has acquired a liturgical function and is sung in gurdwaras during the early hours of the morning. It consists of twenty-four *paurīs*, each with attendant shaloks (normally two), and may be sung in full or in an abridged form. For the singing of the unabridged form a period of three hours is required.

[4] In the case of Gurū Aṅgad, the second Gurū, only shaloks have been recorded. A few compositions by the ninth Gurū, Tegh Bahādur, also appear, having been added later to the collection originally compiled by Gurū Arjan.

[5] See *B40(Eng)*, p. 3n.

Nānak, etc.) and is occasionally dropped altogether, leaving only the relevant number.

Miscellaneous works

The epilogue which follows the conclusion of the rāga section consists of a series of miscellaneous works. Prominent among these are a collection of *śloks* attributed to Sheikh Farīd, a similar collection attributed to Kabīr, and a collection of surplus *śloks* by the Gurūs for which no place could be found in the *vārs*.

In this unusually systematic manner the Ādi Granth was compiled. There are exceptions to the pattern, but they are few and unimportant.

Terminology relating to the Ādi Granth

The title *Ādi Granth* itself requires a brief note of explanation. *Granth* means simply 'book', and to this has been appended the adjective *ādi*, or 'first', to distinguish this *Granth* from the *Dasam Granth*, the 'Tenth Book'.[1] In Sikh usage the Ādi Granth is normally referred to as the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* (to which further honorifics may be added). This expresses the Sikh belief in the scripture as Gurū.[2] The contents of the scripture are commonly referred to as *bāṇi* ('utterance'), or as *gurbāṇī* ('the utterance of the Gurū').

Any individual hymn from the Ādi Granth (*chaupad*, *aṣṭapadī*, or *chhant*) is invariably called a *śabad*,[3] literally 'word'. The usage evidently derives from the weight of emphasis laid by Gurū Nānak and his successors upon the doctrine of the *Śabad*. According to the teachings of Nānak the *Śabad*, or divine Word, is the vehicle of communication between God and man.[4] The *bāṇi*, or 'utterance', of the enlightened *gurū* or *bhagat* embodies this divine Word, and the term used for the Word itself thus came to be applied to the composition which gave it expression.

The term is very extensively employed in the janam-sākhīs and in all later Sikh literature, and for this reason it has been given an anglicized form in this study of the janam-sākhīs. The word *śabad*, when used to denote a composition by Gurū Nānak, is rendered 'shabad'. For the same reason *ślok* has been rendered 'shalok'. The two forms 'shabad' and 'shalok' both approximate closely to Pañjābī pronunciation. (In speech, as in its written Gurmukhī form, Pañjābī normally separates conjuncts.) The third basic term, *pauṛī*, has been translated as 'stanza'.

---

[1] The appendage *dasam* is normally taken to refer to the belief that the contents of this later collection are all the works of the tenth Gurū, Gobind Siṅgh. It has, however, been suggested that it should properly be understood to mean 'one tenth', i.e. a tenth part of a much longer collection. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. i (London, 1963), p. 316.

[2] *GNSR*, p. 2.

[3] Hindī *śabda*. This particular usage corresponds to the Hindī term *pada*.

[4] *GNSR*, pp. 191–4.

APPENDIX 8

DATE CHART

INDIA (General)
1451 Accession of Bahlūl Lodī 1498 Arrival of Vasco da Gama
1526 Battle of Pāṇīpat   Accession of Bābur 1556 Accession of Akbar
1605 Accession of Jahāngīr 1628 Accession of Shāhjahān 1659 Accession of Aurangzeb
1707 Death of Aurangzeb 1744 ⎫ 1749 ⎬ First Anglo-French War 1757 Battle of Plassey 1784 Pitt's India Act
1828 Bentinck Governor-General
1848 Dalhousie Governor-General
1857 Sepoy Uprising
1885 Founding of Indian National Congress
1919 Government of India Act

THE PAÑJĀB
1469 Birth of Gurū Nānak
1520 Sack of Saidpur 1539 Death of Gurū Nānak

1603 ⎫ 1604 ⎭	Compilation of the Ādi Granth
1606	Death of Gurū Arjan
1634	Gurū Hargobind's withdrawal to the Śivālik Hills
1675	Execution of Gurū Tegh Bahadur
1699	Founding of the Khālsā

1708	Death of Gurū Gobind Siṅgh

1747 ⎱ 1769 ⎰	Invasions of Ahmad Shāh Abdālī Rise of the Sikh *misls*
1799	Capture of Lahore by Rañjīt Siṅgh

1839	Death of Rañjīt Siṅgh
1845 ⎫ 1846 ⎭	First Anglo-Sikh War
1848 ⎱ 1849 ⎰	Second Anglo-Sikh War British annexation of the Pañjāb
1873	Singh Sabhā founded

	Gurdwara Reform Movement
1919	Jallianwālā Bāgh

JĀNAM-SĀKHĪS

Development of *Narrative I* tradition

	Bhāī Gurdās's *Vārs*
	Period of *Purātan* and early *Miharbān* development
1658	Copying of earliest extant *Bālā* MS.

1701	Copying of earliest extant *Ādi Sākhīs* MSS.
	? *Gyān-ratanāvalī* development
1733	Copying of *B40 Janam-sākhī*
	Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak
1776	*Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā*

1823	Santokh Singh's *Nānak Prakāś*
1828	Copying of earliest extant *Miharbān* MS.
1870	First printed janam-sākhī (*Bālā*)
1877	Trumpp's *The Ādi Granth*

1885   Publication of *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād* texts

1909   Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion*

1926   Vīr Singh's *Purātan Janam-sākhī*

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Janam-sākhīs: important manuscripts

Ādi Sākhīs manuscript in the Sikh Reference Library, Amritsar (MS no. S462), n.d.

Ādi Sākhīs manuscript in the library of Motī Bāgh Palace, Paṭiālā, dated S.1758 (A.D. 1701).

B40 Janam-sākhī. India Office Library MS Panj. B40, dated S. 1790 (A.D. 1733). Photocopies held by Languages Department of the Punjab, Paṭiālā (MS no. 474), Punjab Archives, Paṭiālā (microfilm), and Baring Union Christian College, Baṭālā (xerox).

Bālā Recension A. Manuscript dated S. 1715 (A.D. 1658) in the possession of Shri P. N. Kapoor of Delhi. Photocopies held by Department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Paṭiālā; and by the Library of Gurū Nānak Dev University, Amritsar.

Bālā Recension A. India Office Library MS. Panj. B41, dated A.D. 1775.

Bālā Recension A. British Library manuscript Or. 2754. 1, n.d.

Bālā Recension B. London School of Oriental and African Studies manuscript no. 104975, dated S. 1912 (A.D. 1855).

Bālā Recension B. Cambridge University Library manuscript no. Add. 921, dated S. 1922 (A.D. 1865).

Colebrooke Janam-sākhī (Purātan tradition). India Office Library manuscript Panj. B6, n.d. Also known as the *Valāit-vālī Janam-sākhī.*

Gyān-ratanāvalī. Three manuscripts in the possession of Professor Prītam Singh of Amritsar, dated S. 1778 (A.D. 1721), S. 1883 (A.D. 1826), and S. 1927 (A.D. 1870).

Gyān-ratanāvalī. MSS. nos. SHR 2300C and SHR 1440 in the Sikh History Research Department of Khālsā College, Amritsar, dated S. 1891 (A.D. 1834) and S. 1895 (A.D. 1838).

LDP 194. Manuscript no. 194 in the Library of the Languages Department of the Punjab, Paṭiālā, n.d.

Miharbān Janam-sākhī. MS. no. SHR 427 of the Sikh History Research Department of Khālsā College, Amritsar, dated S. 1885 (A.D. 1828). Contains first three of original total of six *pothīs.*

Miharbān Janam-sākhī. MS. no. SHR 2190 of the Sikh History Research Department of Khālsā College, Amritsar, n.d. Substantial fragment of first *pothī.*

Prāchīn Janam-sākhī (expanded *Purātan*). Manuscript in the possession of S. Sevā Singh Sevak of Tarn Tāran, n.d.

Purātan janam-sākhī (*Hāfizābād* text). MS. no. 2913 of the Central Public Library, Paṭiālā, dated S. 1747 (A.D. 1690).

Purātan janam-sākhī (*Hāfizābād* text). MS. no. SHR 2310A in the Sikh History Research Department of Khālsā College, Amritsar, dated S. 1829 (A.D. 1772).

Purātan janam-sākhī (*Colebrooke/Hāfizābād* text). Manuscript dated S. 1814 (A.D. 1757) in the possession of S. Kuldīp Singh Bedī of Baṭālā.

For additional janam-sākhī manuscripts see Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Pañjābī hath-likhatān dī sūchī,* 2 vols. (Paṭiālā, 1961 and 1963).

Janam-sākhīs: published texts

A *Bālā* janam-sākhī lithographed by Hāfaz Qutub Dīn, Lahore, S. 1928 (A.D. 1871).

A *Bālā* janam-sākhī lithographed by Mālik Dīvān Būṭā Singh, Lahore, S. 1928 (A.D. 1871).

A *Bālā* janam-sākhī lithographed by Maulvī Maibūb Ahmad, Lahore, A.D. 1890.

Gyān-ratanāvalī (Mani Singh Janam-sākhī), lithographed by Charāg Dīn and Sarāj Dīn, Lahore, A.D. 1891.

Gyān-ratanāvalī, lithographed by Lālā Mehar Chand, Bombay, A.D. 1892.

Gyān-ratanāvalī, lithographed by the Sanskrit Book Depot, Lahore, A.D. 1894.

Gyān-ratanāvalī, lithographed by Gulāb Singh and Sons, Lahore, A.D. 1908.

GURDĀS BHALLĀ (Bhāī Gurdās), *Vārān Bhāī Gurdās*, ed. Hazārā Singh and Vīr Singh, Amritsar, 1962.

KIRPĀL SINGH (ed.), *Janam sākhī paramparā.* Texts of the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*, the first three *pothis* of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, *Bālā* Recension A, and the 1892 Bombay edition of the *Gyān-ratanāvalī*. Paṭiālā, 1969.

LAHORE SINGH SABHĀ, lithographed edition of the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*, Lahore, 1884.

MACAULIFFE, M. A. (ed.), *Janam Sākhī Bābe Nānak Ji ki*, Rāwalpiṇḍī, 1885. (Macauliffe's edition of the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*.)

Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak. Portion of text dealing with Guru Nānak in Gaṇḍā Singh (ed.), *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Gurū Nānak* (Pañjābī section, pp. 32–46), Paṭiālā, 1969.

MIHARBĀN JĪ SOḌHĪ, *Janam-sākhī Sri Gurū Nānak Dev Ji.* Vol. 1, ed. Kirpāl Singh and Shamsher Singh Ashok, Amritsar, 1962, Vol. 2, ed. Prakāś Singh, Amritsar, 1969.

Photozincograph Facsimile of the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*, Dehrā Dūn, 1885.

PIĀR SINGH (ed.), *Janam Sākhī Sri Gurū Nānak Dev Ji*, Amritsar, 1974. (India Office Library manuscript Panj. B40).

PIĀR SINGH (ed.), *Śambhū Nāth vāli janam patri Bābe Nānak ji ki prasidh nān Ādi Sākhiān*, Paṭiālā, 1969. (The *Ādi Sākhis.*)

Pothī janam-sākhī, a version of the *Bālā* tradition lithographed in the Arabic script by Har Sukh Rai and Gobind Sahai, owners of the Ganesh Prakash Press, Lahore, 1870.

SARŪP DĀS BHALLĀ, *Gurū Nānak Mahimā* and *Mahimā Prakāś*, ed. Shamsher Singh Ashok and Gobind Singh Lāmbā, Paṭiālā, 1970 and 1971. (A text of the *Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā.*)

SEVĀ SINGH SEVAK (ed.), *Prāchin Janam Sākhī*, Jalandhar, 1969. (A *Purātan* text.)

SHAMSHER SINGH ASHOK (ed.), *Purātan Janam-sākhī Sri Gurū Nānak Dev Ji ki*, Amritsar, 1969. (A conflation of one *Purātan* and two *Ādi Sākhis* MSS.)

VĪR SINGH (ed.), *Purātan Janam-sākhī*, Amritsar, several editions.

English translations of janam-sākhīs

The *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*
Trumpp, E., *The Ādi Granth*, London, 1877, pp. vii–xlv.
Much of the first volume of M. A. Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion* (Oxford, 1909) consists of a free translation of the *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād* janam-sākhīs.

Selections from the *Bālā* tradition
  Trumpp, E., op. cit., pp. xlvi–lxxvi.
  Court, H., *History of the Sikhs*, Lahore, 1888, pp. 142–239.
W. H. McLeod, *The B40 Janam-sākhī*, Amritsar, 1979.
Gurdās Bhallā (Bhāī Gurdās)
  Gaṇḍā Singh (ed.), *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Gurū Nānak*, Paṭiālā,
  1969, English section, pp. 33–4. (A translation by W. H. McLeod of *Vār*
  1:23–45 and *Vār* xi:13–14.)
Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak
  Gaṇḍā Singh (ed.), op. cit., English section, pp. 59–87. (A translation by W. H.
  McLeod of the portion of the *Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak* relating to Gurū Nānak.)

Other works

FAUJĀ SINGH and A. C. ARORĀ (ed.), *Papers on Guru Nanak*. Proceedings of
  the Punjab History Conference (Fourth Session, 1969), Paṭiālā, 1970. (Eng).
GURBACHAN KAUR, 'Janam Sākhī of Bhāī Bālā: authentic text and its critical
  editing'. Unpub. doctoral thesis, Gurū Nānak Dev University, Amritsar, 1978.
  (Pbī.)
HANS, S. S., 'The Mehrban *Janam-Sakhi*', in J. S. Grewal (ed.), *Studies in Local
  and Regional History*. Amritsar, 1974, pp. 86–108. (Eng.)
HARBANS SINGH, *Guru Nanak and the Origins of the Sikh Faith*. Bombay, 1969.
  (Eng.)
JAGJĪT SINGH, *Ādhunik Janam Sākhī*. Ludhiānā, 1970. (Pbī.)
JAGJĪT SINGH, *Ādi Sākhīān dā Ālochanātamak Adhiain*. Ludhiānā, 1973. (Pbī).
JAGJĪT SINGH, *Janam-sākhīān Srī Gurū Nānak Dev Jī dā Tārakik Adhiain*.
  Ludhiānā, 1970. (Pbī.)
KIRPĀL SINGH KOMAL (ed.), *Janam-sākhī Adhiain*. Farīdkoṭ, 1970. (Pbī.)
MACAULIFFE, M. A., *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I. Oxford, 1909. (Eng.)
McLEOD, W. H., *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*. Delhi, 1975; Oxford,
  1976. (Eng.)
McLEOD, W. H., *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*. Oxford, 1968; Delhi, 1976.
  (Eng.)
McLEOD, W. H., 'Procedures in analysing the sources for the life of Gurū
  Nānak', in *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XLV, Part I (April 1967), pp. 207–27.
  (Eng.)
MOHAN SINGH, *A History of Panjabi Literature*. Amritsar, 1956. (Eng.)
PIĀR SINGH, 'A Critical Survey of Panjabi Prose in the Seventeenth Century'.
  Unpub. doctoral thesis, Pañjāb University, Chaṇḍīgaṛh, 1968. (Eng.)
PIĀR SINGH et al., *Gurū Nānak sambandhī tin khoj-pattar*. Paṭiālā, 1970. (Pbī.)
RATTAN SINGH JAGGI, *Dasam Granth dā Paurāṇik Adhiain*. Jalandhar, 1965.
  (Pbī.)
RATTAN SINGH JAGGI, *Janam Sākhī Bhāī Bālā*. 26 pp. Amritsar, 1974. (Pbī.)

GLOSSARY

Pañjābī forms are given in all instances. Corresponding Hindī forms are in some instances given in parentheses.

akhāṛā: 'arena', temple or monastery of the Udāsī panth.
āsaṇ: yogic posture; abode of yogīs.
aṣṭapadi: a hymn of eight (occasionally more) stanzas.
Bābā: 'Father', a term of respect applied to holy men.
baḍā: big, great.
bairāgī: Hindu renunciant.
bāṇi (vāṇi): speech; the utterances of the Gurūs and bhagats (q.v.) recorded in the Ādi Granth. The amplified form *gurbāṇi* is commonly used.
bhagat (bhakta): an exponent of *bhagti (bhakti)* (q.v.); a devotee.
bhagti (bhakti): belief in, and adoration of, a personal God.
bhallā: good, noble.
chaudhari: head man of a village or caste grouping.
dān: gift, charity, alms.
darśan: view, vision; audience with a person of regal or spiritual stature, visit to a holy shrine or object; the six systems of brahmanical philosophy.
darveś: dervish, a Muslim mendicant (esp. Sūfī).
dharamsālā: in early Sikh usage a room or building used for devotional singing and prayer.
digvijaya: the conquest of territories in all four directions, an achievement imputed to particularly powerful kings or (as spiritual conquest) to a powerful preacher.
faqīr: 'poor man', Muslim renunciant; loosely used to designate Sūfīs and also non-Muslim renunciants.
goṣṭ, goṣṭi: discourse.
gurbāṇi: 'the utterance of the Gurū', cf. *bāṇi* (q.v.).
gurduārā: gurdwara, Sikh temple.
Gurmukhi: the script used for writing Pañjābī.
gurū: a spiritual preceptor, usually a person but sometimes understood as the divine inner voice.
halāl: 'lawful', in accordance with Muslim prescriptions.
haṭha-yoga: 'yoga of force', a variety of yoga requiring physical postures and processes of extreme difficulty.
iśnān: bathing.
jathā: military detachment.
kabitt: a poetic metre.
karoṛī: a high-ranking revenue collector of the Mughal period.
kathā: narrative; oral exposition.
Khālsā; the Sikh order, brotherhood, instituted in 1699 by Gurū Gobind Singh.
khānqāh: residence of a Sūfī pīr, with buildings for disciples, charitable purposes, etc.
kīrtan: corporate singing of hymns.
kos, koh (krośa): a linear measure varying from one to two miles in different parts of India. In the Pañjāb it has generally been computed as the equivalent of one-and-a-half miles.

kuṟam: the relationship subsisting between the fathers of a married couple. A husband's father is the *kuṟam* of the husband's father-in-law and vice versa.

langoṭ-band: celibate ascetic.

loṭā: small, round, metal pot.

Mahalā: a code-word used to distinguish works by different Gurūs in the Ādi Granth. Gurū Nānak, as first Gurū, is designated *Mahalā 1* or simply *M1*; the second Gurū, Aṅgad, is designated *Mahalā 2* or *M2*; etc.

mahant: chief; superior of a monastery or other religious institution.

mahā-purukh: a person of exalted spiritual status.

maṭh: religious establishment, monastery.

miharāb: the niche in a mosque which indicates the direction of the Ka'bah in Mecca.

misl: Sikh military bands of the eighteenth century.

mullah: a teacher of the law and doctrines of Islam.

murīd: disciple (Muslim).

mush'ara: an assembly gathered to recite and hear poetry.

Nāgari, Devanāgarī: the script used for writing Sanskrit and Hindī.

nām: the divine Name, the expression of the nature and being of God in terms comprehensible to the human understanding.

nām japai: the same process as *nām simaran* (q.v.).

nām simaran: repeating the divine Name of God; meditating on God.

Nāth: lit. 'master'. A yogic sect of considerable influence prior to and during the time of the early Sikh Gurūs. Its members, who are also known as Kānphaṭ yogīs, practised haṭha-yoga (q.v.) in order to obtain immortality.

paṇḍit: an erudite person; a mode of address used for Brāhmaṇs.

panth: lit. path, road. System of religious belief and practice. The form 'Panth' designates the Sikh community.

pargana: subdivision of a district.

pauṟi: stanza.

pīr: the head of a Sūfī order; a Sūfī saint.

pothī: volume, tome.

qalandar: itinerant Muslim ascetic.

qāzī, qāḍī: a Muslim judge, administrator of Islamic law.

qibla: the direction of the Ka'bah in Mecca.

rabāb: stringed instrument resembling a rebeck.

rāg: raga; a series of five or more notes on which a melody is based.

rahat, rahit: the code of discipline of the Khālsā (q.v.).

rahit-nāmā: a recorded version of the Khālsā code of discipline.

śabad: shabad; word; the divine self-communication; a hymn from the Ādi Granth.

sādh, sādhū: one who has attained spiritual excellence; holy man; renunciant.

Sahaj-dhārī: A Sikh who neither accepts baptism into the Khālsā (q.v.) nor observes its code of discipline.

sākhi (pl. *sākhiān*): (1) testimony, witness, evidence; (2) section of a janam-sākhī.

samādhi: tomb, cenotaph.

saṅgat: assembly, religious congregation.

satsaṅg: the fellowship of true believers, congregation.

sevā: deeds of piety; service rendered to a person or place of religious eminence.

Siddh: Eighty-four exalted personages believed to have attained immortality through the practice of yoga and to be dwelling deep in the Himalayas. In the janam-sākhīs the term is confused with *Nāth* (q.v.).

śiva-liṅga: phallic emblem of Śiva.

ślok: shalok; couplet or stanza.

śraddh: rite commemorating deceased forbear.

sudi: the light half of a lunar month, the period of the waxing moon. Cf. *vadi*.

tapā: ascetic, one skilled in the practice of *tapasya* (q.v.).

tapas, tapasya: religious austerities.

vadi: the dark half of a lunar month, the period of the waning moon. Cf. *sudi*.

vār: a heroic ode of several stanzas; a song of praise; a dirge.

yagya, yajna: sacrificial rite; ritual feast.

INDEX OF JANAM-SĀKHĪ
ANECDOTES AND DISCOURSES

In some instances sākhīs listed below are referred to in the text by their
sākhī numbers in particular janam-sākhī collections, not by their titles.

GENERAL INDEX

Indian personal names are listed below in accordance with the initial letter
of the first name.